THE WHITE CRYSTALS

BY

HOWARD R. GARIS

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THE WHITE CRYSTALS

THE WHITE CRYSTALS

Being an Account of the Adventures of Two Boys

BY

HOWARD R. GARIS

AUTHOR OF "WITH FORCE AND ARMS," "THE KING OF UNADILLA," "THE WHETSTONE OF SWORDS," ETC., ETC.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY

BERTHA CORSON DAY

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TO

MY SON ROGER

THIS BOOK IS AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED

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THE WHITE CRYSTALS

CHAPTER I

THE DOCTOR'S ADVICE

Dr. Glasby looked over the rims of his spectacles at the boy before him. Then he glanced at Mr. Anderson, cleared his throat with a loud "ahem" that made Roger start, and said, very ponderously:

"Um!"

"Well?" asked Mr. Anderson, a little anxious tone coming into his voice, "what 's the verdict, doctor?"

"Um!" said the physician again. "Nothing very serious, Mr. Anderson. Roger, here, is a little run down, that 's all. He 's been studying too hard, his eyes are a trifle weak, muscles flabby, and his blood has n't enough of the good red stuff in it. In short, he must live out of doors for a year or so, and then I 'll guarantee he will come back with red cheeks and a pair of arms that will make you proud of him. Eh, Roger?" and Dr. Glasby pinched the rather small and soft biceps of the boy, smiling the while, good naturedly.

"No disease, then, doctor?" from Mr. Anderson.

"Nothing, my dear sir, except a general poor condition of the system."

"Don't he need medicine, a tonic, or something? His mother and I are quite worried about him."

"Not a drop of medicine for this patient," exclaimed Dr. Glasby. "Fresh air, fresh country air, and more air. That 's all."

The physician turned aside to replace the apparatus he had used; the stethoscope, with which he had listened to the beating of Roger's heart, the eye-testing mirrors and lights, and the lung-cylinder, into which the boy had blown more feebly than Dr. Glasby had liked to see.

"Then your prescription is — ?" began Mr. Anderson.

"Have him drop his books and studies, stop school, at least for a year, and get out into the country. You 'll have to see for yourself that it is put up, for no drug store could supply those ingredients. Can you arrange it?"

"I think so, doctor. I 'll try, anyhow," and, with a hearty handshake, while his face wore a more relieved look than when he entered the office, Mr. Anderson left Dr. Glasby, taking Roger with him.

The journey home was rather a quiet one between Roger and his father. They boarded a surface car on Broadway, and, as it swung along through the turmoil of this principal New York street, they were thinking of what they had just heard. Moving now fast and now slow, according to the obstructions of trucks on the tracks, the car clanged on its way. Once it stopped short, suddenly, to allow a spark-emitting fire engine and a swaying truck with long ladders to dash by to a blaze. Then Roger leaped to his feet, watching, as long as possible, the exciting rush of the red-

helmeted and rubber-coated men, his eyes brightening as he noted the plunging, rearing horses.

"Let's get out and go to the fire!" he called to his father.

"Not now, son," answered Mr. Anderson. "Your mother will be anxious to hear what Dr. Glasby said, and we don't want to delay and cause her worry, you know."

"All right," agreed Roger, with just a little disappointment in his tone, for he did want to see the fire. But he soon forgot that in wondering what would happen if he did n't have to go to school for a whole year. The suggestion contained such possibilities that he was lost in a maze with plans of what he would do with his time.

Meanwhile the car continued along more rapidly, and it was not a great while before father and son reached home. Then, as Roger helped his five-year-old brother Edward to build a castle out of blocks, Mr. Anderson told his wife the result of the visit to Dr. Glasby. She was much relieved when she learned there was nothing serious the matter with her son, and there was a happy look in her eyes as she glanced at her two boys playing together on the floor.

The Andersons lived in a large but pleasant apartment house on the "west side," as it is called in New York. It was on Thirty-third Street, just west of Ninth Avenue, along which thoroughfare the elevated railroad passed. It was so near this, that in warm weather, when the windows were open nights, Roger could hear the rattle of the trains and the clatter and hum of the electric motor cars. In

fact it was quite a noisy place, where Roger lived, but no one in the neighborhood seemed to mind it, or, if they did, they had grown so used to it that they never spoke of it. Of course there was no yard, and no place to play, except in the street, for space is too valuable in New York to have yards to houses. But there was the flat roof of the big apartment, where scores of families lived, and Roger and his boy friends sometimes enjoyed their sports up there.

Roger Anderson was just past his fifteenth year, rather small for his age, and not nearly as strong and sturdy as his parents wished he was. Lately his eyes had been troubling him, and he had complained of frequent headaches. He was in his first season at high school, and what, with taking up Latin and algebra, two new worlds of study for the boy, he had been rather closely applied to his books at night. As he was ambitious he threw himself into the vim of learning with an energy that was pleasing to his parents and teachers, though it had a bad effect on his health. For, after a few weeks of school, it was noticed that he was failing in energy. There were many days when, in spite of his desire, he felt disinclined to go to his classes, and he was troubled with dizziness. In short he seemed in such poor shape that Mr. Anderson determined on a visit to Dr. Glasby, the old family physician. That night, after the consultation with the medical man, when Roger had gone to bed, his father and mother sat up to talk the matter over.

"I don't like to think of his losing a year's schooling,"

said Mr. Anderson, as he thought how valuable education was.

"Better that than to have him get really ill and have to stop altogether," replied Mrs. Anderson.

Both were silent a few minutes, turning the question over in their minds.

"I suppose we should follow Dr. Glasby's advice as soon as possible," said Mrs. Anderson, at length. "I wonder what we ought to do. Where can we send him? Oh dear! I don't at all like the idea of his going away from us. I just know he 'll sit about in damp shoes, and his buttons will all come off, for they are always loose, and no one to sew them on."

"Well," said Mr. Anderson, a little twinkle in his eyes, "losing buttons is n't to be compared to having one's health break down, and, as for wet shoes, he can take pairs enough along to change whenever he gets in the water. Still I must confess I don't like to think of Roger being away from us, but he 'll have to leave home some day, I suppose, and there 's nothing like getting used to it. I went away from my home when I was fourteen years old."

"It was different when you were a boy," said Mrs. Anderson, and her husband smiled, while he wondered how it was.

"Where do you suppose we can send him?" went on Mr. Anderson. "Dr. Glasby says a year in the country. Now we can't afford to pay heavy expenses, yet I am determined the boy shall have a free run in the fresh air, and live out doors for a change."

Mrs. Anderson thought for a moment.

"I have it!" she cried, suddenly. "He can go to his Uncle Bert's, at Cardiff. It will be the very thing for him, and when you get your vacation next summer we can all go up there and see him."

Mr. Anderson hesitated a minute, for that idea had never come to him.

"I believe it will be a good plan," he said heartily. "Yes, I 'm sure it will. I 'm glad you thought of it. We 'll send Roger to Cardiff."

Thus it was settled that Roger was to give up his studies, which announcement, when he heard it next morning, made him both glad and sorry.

It was a fine day in October, and school had been in session a little more than a month of the fall term. The visit to the doctor had been made on Saturday. Sunday was spent in talking over the subject more fully in the Anderson household, and in writing a letter to "Albertus Kimball, Esq., Cardiff, Onondaga County, N. Y." This man was Mrs. Anderson's farmer brother. On Monday, instead of going to school, Roger accompanied his father down town, where they did considerable shopping in the way of buying some clothing and underwear for the boy's outfit. Mr. Anderson also got a stout valise, and filled it with articles he thought his son might need. Then, rather tired with tramping about, they had dinner in a busy restaurant on Barclay Street, much to Roger's delight, for he seldom ate in such places, and it was quite a treat to order just what he liked best.

After lunch Mr. Anderson went to the high school where his son was enrolled, to give notice to the principal of Roger's withdrawal.

They arrived just before school assembled for the afternoon session, and, while Mr. Anderson was talking with Mr. Blake, the principal, Roger wandered into the familiar court-yard, where he met a number of classmates.

"Going to leave, eh?" they all questioned as the news got around. "Say, Roger, you 're a lucky chap. I wish my father would take me out of school."

"I believe I 'd rather stay," said Roger.

"Oh, cut that out! What you giving us!" called several, sincerely, if not politely.

"No, I would, really," insisted Roger, and he honestly meant it, though he could not help feeling a little important over the small excitement he was creating among his companions. Still he did like his studies very much, for he was just beginning to appreciate the inspiration of Virgil, the wonders of the science work, and the sturdy exactness of algebraic equations.

A few minutes later Mr. Anderson came out of Mr. Blake's office, and the two men walked over to where Roger stood. Mr. Blake shook hands with him, gravely, and, while expressing regret that his pupil was leaving school, agreed that it was best, under the circumstances. He hoped to see Roger back again, he said, much improved in health, and, with cheery good-byes from his companions, the boy walked out of the school-yard with his father. There was just the trace of tears in Roger's eyes, which he

hoped his father would n't see, for, after all, it was rather hard to leave such a lot of fine chums as he had.

For the next few days there were busy times in the Anderson home. Such an overhauling of Roger's clothes, such a sewing on of buttons, double strong, almost enough for a small army of boys, such a darning of stockings, and a mending of rents in coats and trousers, and such admonition and advice as his mother gave him, from never forgetting to say his prayers, to not neglecting to clean his teeth. For he had never been away from his parents before, in all his short life, and it was a momentous occasion.

The novelty of the affair, and the anticipation of adventures in store for him, kept Roger from thoughts that he might possibly be lonesome or homesick, after he had started away. Under the stimulus of preparation he even began to feel better in health. His pale cheeks showed a little color, and his head had not ached since he had been to the doctor's.

On Thursday a letter came from Uncle Bert, telling Mrs. Anderson to send Roger right along; that they would all try to make him comfortable and happy. So it was arranged he was to start next Monday night, and, to Mrs. Anderson, the time, until then, seemed altogether too short, though, boylike, Roger thought the intervening days would never pass. His ticket had been purchased, his valise packed, and by Sunday night everything was in readiness. At church that day the boy felt his eyes grow a little misty as the choir sang the solemn songs, but he made up his mind

that he must play the part of a man now, at least as far as appearances went. So he gulped down the lump in his throat.

The train was to leave the Grand Central Station of the New York Central Railroad at nine o'clock Monday night. The last arrangements had been made, and Mr. Anderson prepared to accompany his son to the depot.

"Bwing me back suffin' nice, Roggy," called little Edward, sleepily, as he put up his cheek to be kissed.

"I will, Eddie, I will," said Roger, his voice trembling a bit, in spite of his determination to be firm. He cuddled his baby brother close to him.

"Now be very careful, my boy," said Mrs. Anderson, for at least the twentieth time. "Clean your teeth every day, and change your shoes as soon as you get your feet wet."

Her motherly eyes showed a suspicious brilliancy, and her voice was not as steady as it usually sounded. She hugged Roger closely to her, and gave him a kiss that he long remembered, and then, with a broken good-bye, she turned and went into the house, while Roger and Mr. Anderson started for the station.

They stepped out briskly, boarded a surface car, and were soon rattling toward Forty-second Street, where the depot was located. Roger was to take a train for Syracuse, a city twelve miles from Cardiff, to which village he would go by wagon or stage. There was plenty of time before nine o'clock, but Mr. Anderson believed in being a little ahead of a train, instead of behind it. He did n't give his

son much advice, for he knew Mrs. Anderson had said all there was to say, and he realized that Roger was a boy who did n't need to be cautioned after what his mother had told him.

The train Roger was to go in had already been made up, and the porter showed him to his place in the sleeping-car, where he had a lower berth.

"Now, my boy," said Mr. Anderson, looking at his watch, "you have ten minutes before starting time. I think I 'll leave you, as you are in good shape here, and I want to get back to your mother. I know you will get along nicely, and I need n't say I know you 'll do what 's right, at all times, for I 'm sure you will. Your Uncle Bert will meet you in Syracuse, when you arrive there in the morning, and you don't have to change cars. The porter will look after you occasionally. Now, good-bye," and with a hearty hand-shake Mr. Anderson left Roger alone.

CHAPTER II

THE SALT CITY

With a toot of the whistle, a squeak of the wheels and a sharp hissing, as the air brakes were released, the train started. The journey was uneventful, no delays or accidents occurring to mar it. About eleven o'clock the porter made up Roger's berth, and, though the boy wondered at the novelty of a bed on what looked much like a shelf, he soon fell asleep, and did not wake up until the sun was a half hour high, which time found him within a few miles of Syracuse.

The colored porter, grinning expansively and good naturedly, for he had been well remembered by Mr. Anderson, brought Roger a steaming hot cup of coffee, which was most agreeable.

"What time do we get in?" asked the boy traveller as he sipped the beverage.

"We 'd ought a' be in at 7.42," replied the colored man, "but we 's a leetle late this mornin', sah. Probably we 'll arrive 'bout eight o'clock. Feelin' purty peart this mornin', sah?"

"Yes, I do feel pretty good," replied Roger, who really did seem better than he had in some weeks. "I did n't think I 'd sleep much, but I did."

"Oh, these here is great beds fo' sleepin'," commented the porter, grinning once more, and causing Roger to wonder, if he smiled any larger, whether the top of his head would n't come off.

It was just ten minutes past eight when the train rolled along one of the main streets of Syracuse, and into the dingy depot, near the centre of the city. Roger was out on the vestibuled platform before the wheels stopped screeching under the force of the brakes. He was watching among the crowd under the shed for a tall man, with a big nose, a light sandy moustache and bright blue eyes, for thus his mother had described his Uncle Bert to him. He looked at several men.

The first one had everything but the blue eyes. The second one all the characteristics save the sandy moustache. But the third man, on whom he fixed his attention, Roger knew was Mr. Kimball. He waved his hand, and was glad to see the man wave back. The next minute the train stopped, and the blue-eyed uncle was ready to reach up for his nephew.

"Is this here Roger Anderson?" came from beneath the light sandy moustache, in a pleasant though high-pitched voice.

"I 'm Roger; are you Uncle Bert?" asked the boy.

"Wa'al, I reckon thet 's what! Guessed ye th' fust time, did n't I," and this fact seemed to give Mr. Kimball so much pleasure that he laughed with a heartiness which made several smile.

"Wa'al now, but d' ye know, I 'm glad t' see ye! Ye 're

a leetle late, but land love ye, comin' three hunderd miles is no joke. I calalate I 'd be a trifle behindhand myself. Now, let 's hev yer satchel, 'n' we 'll go 'n' git some breakfust. I ain't eat yit. Ye see I come out from Cardiff yist'day, hevin' t' do some tradin', 'n' I stayed over night at th' Candee House, so 's t' be on hand t' meet ye. I told th' waiter at my table I 'd hev a hungry boy back 'ith me soon. Ye be hungry, ain't ye?" with rather an anxious look at Roger.

"Well, not so very," admitted the boy, wondering a little at the strange sounding talk of his uncle, who spoke the central New York farmers' homely but comprehensive dialect.

"Oh, shucks now!" exclaimed Mr. Kimball. "I were calalatin' on seein' ye race 'ith me eatin' ham 'n' eggs 'n' bread 'n' butter," and he seemed a bit disappointed. "Howsomever we 'll remedy thet when we git ye out t' Cardiff. 'Fore ye 've been thar a week I 'll hev ye eatin' salt-risin' bread, covered 'ith butter 'n' honey — say 'j ever tackle real fresh salt-risin' bread, spread thick 'ith nice brown buckwheat honey, right outen th' hives?"

"I never did," confessed Roger.

"Wa'al, then, ye 've got a lot a' pleasure ahead on ye," remarked Mr. Kimball, "thet 's all I 've got t' say. But Land o' Goshen, here I be talkin', 'stid a leadin' th' way t' th' hotel. Come 'long now, 't ain't fer," and they started off in lively fashion, while Roger wondered what sort of a man his uncle was.

Though he did not eat a hearty meal, the boy, under the

eyes of Mr. Kimball, made out quite a breakfast, while his companion put away a hearty one, with evident relish. The waiter was kept busy, and Roger wondered vaguely how a man could drink so many cups of coffee as his uncle did; no less than four large ones being disposed of.

"We don't start back 'til three o'clock," said Mr. Kimball, using his napkin rapidly. "Porter Amidown's stage leaves then. I 'd a druv out 'ith th' Democrat wagin, but it needs a new wheel, so I calalated I 'd better come in 'n' go out by th' stage."

"Is that Democratic too?" asked Roger, who, like nearly every New York boy, was of the political faith of his father, who was a Republican.

"Democrat? Th' stage Democrat? Land no, Porter 's a rip-snortin' Prohib. Oh, I see, ye thought my wagin was a Democrat one, 'stid a' bein' Republican. Ha! ha! Why we call them vehicles thet name, not 'cause they 're in politics, but jist t' hev a way a' speakin' 'bout 'em, thet 's all, same 's a phaeton er runabout. Th' stage a Democrat! Ho! ho! Don't ye let Porter hear ye say thet," and Mr. Kimball seemed quite tickled over Roger's natural mistake.

"So 's we don't start back 'til three o'clock," he went on, occasionally chuckling over the joke, "we 'll hev some time t' do a leetle tradin', fer I did n't finish yist'day. Thet 'll give ye a chanst t' look around th' city. Ade, he 's yer cousin, ye know, wanted me t' bring him 'long, but I calalated there 'd be trouble ef I did, so I left him hum. He 'd want ye t' rassal right here in th' street."

"Rassal?" inquired Roger, wondering what was meant.

"Yep, rassal. Ketch 's ketch kin, collar 'n' elbow, ye know. Ade 's dead set on rassalin'. Do ye do it much?"

"No," said Roger, "I 'm not much good at wrestling," and he began to be a little apprehensive as to the character of his cousin Adrian.

"Wa'al, ye 'll hev t' rassal 'ith him when ye git hum," remarked Mr. Kimball, as if it was the most natural thing in the world. "He 's allers a rassalin' all th' boys, th' hired men, 'n' so on."

"Is he pretty strong?" asked Roger.

"Tol'able, jest tol'able," replied Mr. Kimball. "But ye need n't worry, he 'll let ye alone ef he finds out he kin throw ye. He never rassals th' second time 'ith anybody he kin throw, lessen it 's fer practice. He 's allers tryin' t' tackle some un a leetle better 'n' what he is. Wants t' git a reputation, he says. His mother says he wants t' git a busted neck, 'n' say, d' ye know," and Mr. Kimball whispered, "sometimes I think she 's more 'n' half right, I do, honest Injun, I do," and he shook his head warningly.

"Wa'al, I guess we might 's well be goin'," he remarked, after a pause, and he led the way from the dining-room.

Mr. Kimball had several places where he wanted to do some trading. He had to buy some dress goods for his wife, a book for Adrian, some sewing silk for his daughter Clara, and some tools for himself. He finished by noon, and after dinner he asked Roger if he did n't want to pay a visit to the salt works, for which Syracuse is noted.

"Indeed, I 'd like to go, first rate," said the boy.

So they walked up to the northern part of the pretty town, where, stretched out in the sun, were the big shallow wooden vats for the evaporation of the brine which was pumped into them. On the way through the works Mr. Kimball explained how the salt springs were underneath the ground on which they were walking, and how the brine was brought to the surface of the earth by machinery. Then it was left for the sun to draw off the water, leaving behind the shining particles that formed the salt of commerce.

The place was filled with buildings, large and small, with pumps, engines and vats, with sheds about which hurried scores of men, and Roger took a great interest looking at everything. He never knew before what a lot of salt came from Syracuse, nor what an important industry it was in the trade of the world, and particularly of New York State.

"My, but we 'll hev t' hustle," remarked Mr. Kimball, suddenly, looking at his big silver watch. "It 's nigh two o'clock, 'n' Porter leaves at three smack. I guess we 'll postpone the rest a' th' salt investigation 'til another time."

So Roger and his uncle made a hurried trip to the Candee House, from which the stage started. They reached it with about five minutes to spare, which Mr. Kimball used in getting together his packages and Roger's baggage, and putting them all snugly in the lumbering vehicle. As he finished, the stage driver came out to see to the hitching up of the horses.

"Porter, this is my nephew I were tellin' ye of," said Mr. Kimball.

Mr. Amidown looked Roger over carefully.

"Leetle spindlin', ain't he?" he suggested after a pause.

"Wa'al, he ain't 's stout's he will be when we git through 'ith him," replied Mr. Kimball with a hearty laugh, as he poked Porter playfully in the ribs. Then he helped Roger up to the high seat, and followed nimbly himself. There was a crack of the long whip, a rattle of the harness chains, a rumble of the wheels and the stage started off.

There were several other passengers making the trip from Syracuse by stage that day, but Roger and his uncle were the only ones on the outside. The big wagon rolled along, first on the asphalt streets, under tall elm and maple trees that lined the thoroughfares, where the houses were so close together that they reminded the boy of New York. Then the residences became more scattered, and farther and farther apart, as the suburbs were reached.

During the early part of the journey Porter was too busy guiding his team of horses in and out among other vehicles to do much talking. Mr. Kimball was engaged in looking over an account book, and making notes of his recent purchases, with the amounts they cost, and so was too much occupied to talk. Thus Roger was left to himself for a while. He was much interested in all that he saw, though of course the city sights were almost like those of New York, except there was not the same bustle and excitement, nor such big, towering buildings.

But when he came into the pretty suburbs it was different. The air was pure and fresh, and the wind was just cool enough to be delightful that October afternoon. Soon the horses were jogging along, the reins flapping loose on their broad backs. Mr. Kimball, putting up his account book, turned to Porter, and asked:

"How 's everything in Cardiff?"

"Oh, so-so," replied Mr. Amidown. "Ain't changed much sence ye come out yist'day."

"No, I don't calalate it has hed much chanst," agreed Mr. Kimball.

Then the two men began to talk of crops, of cows and horses, of the farm of this one and the garden of that one, the grape and the honey outlook, until Roger wondered how they could remember so many different names and the kinds of things that grew.

Finally Mr. Kimball bethought himself that his nephew might be lonesome, with no one to talk to, so he turned his attention to the boy, and told him of the country through which they were passing. He showed him where Enos Jones had a good field of wheat, and where Nathan Parks was expecting to gather in a fine yield of corn, and so on, until the city boy felt some of the importance of farming, and how much the people of this country depend on it.

The stage rumbled on, up hill and down dale, along the twelve miles. About five o'clock they came within sight of the white-spired church of Cardiff, and it was not long before they reached the outskirts of the village. The big

vehicle stopped at the post-office. Porter threw off a bag of mail, called to the horses to resume their pulling again, and, five minutes later he drew up in front of a comfortable farmhouse, in the yard of which stood a pleasant-faced woman and a boy about Roger's age.

CHAPTER III

A TEST OF STRENGTH

"Hey, Pop! Have you brought him?" shouted the sturdy youngster whom Roger looked down at from the top of the stage. It seemed to him as if the boy was inquiring for some new kind of wild animal.

"He 's here all right, Ade," replied Mr. Kimball, as he assisted his nephew down. "He 's on time t' th' minute, 'n' I hope yer mother 's got suthin' good fer us both t' eat."

"Land sakes! Allers thinkin' a' suthin' t' put in yer stomach," exclaimed Mrs. Kimball, laughing as she came forward to meet Roger and give him a hearty kiss.

"Here! You two boys git acquainted," commanded Mr. Kimball, and he and his wife stood aside until Roger could advance and meet his country cousin. Adrian and Roger were about the same age, and, though they were both nearly of equal height, Adrian was the more sturdy of the two, and it was easily seen what an advantage he had because of his life in the open air. He was tanned, and as brown as a butternut on his hands and face, and there was a clearness to his skin and a brightness to his eyes that Roger lacked, for the latter was pale, and his eyes showed the effects of hard study. Perhaps for a

minute the two boys sized each other up, almost like two dogs that meet for the first time, and when each is uncertain as to the other's intention.

Roger held out his hand, and Adrian took it in a firm grasp, shaking it up and down, pump-handle fashion.

"Can you wrestle?" asked the country boy suddenly. It was his first greeting.

"A little," admitted Roger, "but I have n't had much chance at it. I know I 'm not very good."

"Come on, then; right here in the grass," said Adrian. He started peeling off his coat.

"Not now, wait until arter supper," commanded Mr. Kimball. "Why, Ade," he went on, "I 'm ashamed on ye. Don't ye know Roger 's bin travellin' a good while, 'n' he ain't hed much rest. I 'm s'prised at ye. 'T ain't fair t' rassal now."

"I 'd just as soon," broke in Roger. "I never claimed to be much of a wrestler, but I 'm not afraid to try."

He made up his mind he was not going to be stumped by any boy of his own age, in a test of strength, without an endeavor. So off came his coat in a hurry.

"Which way are you used to?" asked Adrian.

"Oh, I 'm not particular."

"Well, catch-as-catch-can then," said the country boy, advancing toward Roger slowly.

It would seem that the two were hardly a match for each other, since the life Adrian led had made him much more sturdy than was his cousin. At the same time, though Roger was not as strong and well set-up as a lad of his age

should have been, he was of wiry frame and quick on his feet. So, after all, the contest might not be so one-sided as it appeared at first.

For a minute the two boys circled about each other, looking for an opening. They had their hands extended, seeking for good holds, and ready to break any too dangerous grip on the part of the other. Their faces were set, and their eyes brightened with excitement, but, as it was all in fun, there was not a trace of anger.

Suddenly Adrian reached out and caught Roger's left hand with his own left. At the same moment he tried to get his right arm about the city boy's neck. But Roger was too quick for him, and, instead of gaining this advantage, Adrian found himself circled about by Roger's arm. Then there was a straining of muscles; the two boys closed in a tight grip, and the struggle was on.

Mr. Kimball watched them with great delight, for he was fond of a contest of this kind; but his wife, while used to the rough play of her own boy with his comrades, was somewhat alarmed for the effects of the wrestling on her nephew, whose frame was not trained to such rough exercise, she thought. However, she said nothing, thinking there was not much likelihood of any serious harm resulting from the tussle. The most that might happen would be a good shaking up, and soreness.

The boys were now wrestling away in earnest. To Roger it was no surprise to feel the sturdy muscles of his opponent, but it was some small wonder to Adrian to find Roger meeting his advance with a force he did not expect

was in his cousin's rather thin arms. At first 'Adrian tried to duck his head out from the encircling hold of Roger. When he could not succeed in this he endeavored to pull the city boy off his feet. That was of little avail, for Roger was lighter than Adrian, and shuffled quickly about on the grass.

When a few minutes of this pulling and hauling had passed, the boys were panting a little, and breathing rapidly. Feeling the need of wind, Roger, for a short while, acted solely on the defensive. Then, seeing he was not making out as poorly as he feared he would, he ventured to try something on the offence. He put out his right leg, and planted it firmly behind that of Adrian's, and then tried to push his cousin over it backward, thinking to throw him in this fashion.

If Roger could have seen the smile that came over 'Adrian's face as he did this, perhaps he would not have been so ready to try the old trick. The country boy let himself be shoved over, ever so slightly. He even became limp in his opponent's hands, and Roger thought he saw victory most unexpectedly before him.

"Wa'al, ef Roger ain't a goin' t' throw him!" exclaimed Mr. Kimball, though not displeased because he was going to see his own son defeated. "Go at him, Roger!" he cried. "You 're th' stuff!"

Then suddenly 'Adrian's body stiffened out. His arms that had been limp became rigid. From tilting backward he straightened up. He twisted his neck from the crook of Roger's arm, grabbed his cousin by the shoulders, shifted

rapidly on his feet, and, with a quick push, sent Roger over backward, pinning him squarely upon his back on the sod.

"A fair fall! A fair fall!" cried Mr. Kimball, dancing about like a youngster himself. "I thought ye had him, Roger, but he fooled ye. Guess ye 'll hev t' eat a leetle mite more, 'fore ye kin throw him," and the farmer chuckled in delight.

Roger got up from the ground. He was smiling slightly, but there was a determined look on his face that was good to see, for it showed he had met defeat bravely, and was not daunted by it.

"That 's one," he said, breathing a trifle hard. "Maybe I 'll do better next time. Are you ready?" and he stood waiting for another trial.

"What! Do you want to go at it again?" asked Adrian, somewhat surprised.

"Of course," answered Roger. "And if you throw me this time I 'll try once more, and then to-morrow, and next day, and the next, until I 've thrown you!"

"That 's th' way t' talk!" exclaimed Mr. Kimball. "That 's what I like t' hear. Never say die!" and he capered about as wild as a boy.

"Paw, how you talk!" said Mrs. Kimball. "Them boys sha'n't rassal any more t'night. Adrian, I 'm s'prised at ye, throwin' yer cousin that has jest come out t' see ye."

"Oh, he 's game, mother. He don't care," replied Adrian, smiling, and much pleased at Roger's pluck. "But

we won't try any more falls right away," he added. "I 'll give you another chance, though, Roger."

"Wa'al, I guess thet 's th' best view t' take," said Mr. Kimball. "Ye know ye come out here t' Cardiff, Roger, t' git fattened up, 'n' ye won't do thet ef ye keep on rassalin'. I guess I 'll declare a flag a' truce. Now mind," and his voice became stern, "no more rassalin' 'til I give ye leave. Ef ye want t' rassal, Ade, ye 'll hev t' take on some un else."

"All right, dad," replied Adrian, good naturedly.

Roger said nothing, but he made up his mind that, though the contest was postponed for a while, he would not rest until he had thrown his cousin in a fair struggle. For the time, however, he was satisfied to wait.

"Come on 'n' wash up fer supper!" cried Mr. Kimball, as the boys were putting on their coats. "Land a' Goshen, I 'm 's hungry 's th' b'ar what sees his shadder on Candlemas Day. Come on, Roger, 'n' I 'll interduce ye t' yer cousin Clara, 'n' let ye set yer teeth in some a' th' finest salt-risin' bread in Cardiff, 'n' th' best buckwheat honey growed in Onondaga County," and he started for the house, followed by the two boys and Mrs. Kimball, who began to ask Roger a score of questions about his father and mother and the baby, which the boy answered as best he could.

For the first time since he had alighted from the stage Roger had a chance to look about him. The comfortable large farmhouse, painted white with green shutters, stood on the east side of the road, which ran along the edge of

the beautiful Onondaga valley. Behind the house rose a gently sloping hill, on the sunny declivities of which was a large vineyard, belonging to Mr. Kimball. In front of the house was a stretch of fields, forming the bottom part of the valley, and some of these broad acres belonged to Adrian's father. The valley was about three miles wide, and, if one should walk across that space he would come to the opposite hills that framed it in, towering up, with densely wooded sides, broken here and there with little farm clearings. It was a most pleasant place to live, Roger thought. He paused for a minute, and turned to look at the view behind him.

The sun was just sinking down behind the topmost trees of the western hills, and the slanting beams, sifting through the red and yellow leaves of the autumn forest, caused the woods to appear as if they were blazing with golden fire. The beauty of the sunset made all pause to look at it, and Roger was sure he had never before seen such a happy, calm, peaceful valley as the one in the centre of which nestled the village of Cardiff.

The Kimball house was of the large roomy kind the early farmers built, with tall white pillars supporting the roof of the front porch, on top of which was a balcony. A gravel driveway passed along the south side of the building leading to the barn in the rear. Instead of going in the front door, which was, as is usual in the country, seldom opened, Mr. Kimball led the way around the side. Roger, following, heard the splash of running water, and, turning the corner, he saw a pipe spouting a sparkling stream which

fell into a big basin, chiselled out of a single solid stone. This was right at the side door of the house.

"Thar!" exclaimed Mr. Kimball, "thar, Roger, you 'll find thet th' best water in th' State. Nothin' like it at Saratogy er New York City. It comes from a spring right up thar on my hill, 'n' we 're th' fust family t' git it, jest 's it bubbles up from th' ground. Here!" taking down the half of an empty cocoanut shell, which served as a dipper, "here, sample it," and he let the spout fill the brown vessel with the babbling, laughing water.

Roger drank deep of the refreshing liquid, for he was thirsty from the long drive, and, when he handed back the empty dipper, with a grateful breath of contentment, his uncle needed no better evidence that the water was good, as indeed any one who has been to Cardiff and tasted of it will bear witness.

Now there was the flutter of a red dress in the doorway, and Roger looked up to meet the gaze of a pretty, brown-eyed girl, whose flushed cheeks took on a deeper color as she smiled at the boy.

"That 's him, Clara," called out Adrian. "That 's him, 'n' I threw him, too."

"Thet 's your cousin Clara," put in Mr. Kimball. "I guess ye never seen her before, 'cause th' last time yer mother were here, Clara wa'n't born yit, 'n' I vum, ye was such a leetle chap, thet it were hard work t' locate ye, in yer long dresses," and he laughed heartily at the remembrance.

Clara held out her hand, which Roger shook warmly.

She was a girl of fourteen, and was almost as large as Roger. He thought her one of the prettiest girls he had ever seen.

"I 'm so glad you got here safely," she said. "I suppose Ade made you wrestle as soon as you got off the stage. I believe he would rather roll in the dirt that way than eat," and she glanced at her brother, who was turning a handspring nimbly.

"Not much I would n't! Not when I know supper 's so near ready," answered Adrian, landing on his feet near Clara.

Then Roger became aware of the nicest odor coming from the region of the kitchen. He thought it was the best he had ever smelled, for he was hungry, more hungry than he had been in several weeks, as his appetite had not been good of late. Now it seemed as if he could not get to the table quickly enough.

Once in the house Mrs. Kimball lost no time. She led Roger to his room, a pleasant chamber next to where Adrian slept, and, when she had seen his valise and trunk brought up, and showed him where the washbowl and pitcher of water could be found, she left him to prepare for supper.

For a minute or two Roger felt a flood of lonesomeness come over him. It was so very quiet, out there in the country, more quiet than he had ever supposed it possible to be. Even though it was only six o'clock, it was more silent than at midnight in New York, where, indeed, there is never lack of noise. Through the open window of the

room came only the faint rattle of a distant wagon down the dusty road, and the chirp of crickets, that had begun their evening song early. For the first time since Roger had started he wished himself home again. It was n't half as nice, this going away, as he had thought it would be. He felt a lump coming into his throat and a trace of moisture into his eyes.

Surely he could n't be going to cry? What, cry? Of course not. Who ever heard of such a thing, even though it did seem lonesome just at first, you know, and even though he could n't help feeling a trifle homesick. He controlled his feelings, poured out the water, and dashed it into his face vigorously. When he had finished using the towel he broke into a cheery whistle that penetrated to the rooms below; and then he bethought himself of his determination to wrestle and throw Adrian some day. He was ready to go downstairs now.

It was a very merry supper. Roger had his first taste of salt-rising bread, which is made without yeast, and he voted it the best he ever ate. He had fresh buckwheat honey, which had been taken from the hives that same day, his uncle told him. Then there was crisp, brown ham, and golden eggs, sugar-coated crullers, and rich creamy milk, and Roger surprised himself by the manner in which he put away the victuals.

The evening was spent in the "settin' room," as Mrs. Kimball called it, where they had kerosene lamps, which seemed strange to the city boy, used only to gas or electricity. About nine o'clock Roger's eyes began to get heavy,

and to feel as if they had sticks in them. His head nodded once or twice, even while his uncle was talking to him.

"Bedtime," announced Mr. Kimball, suddenly, and Roger was glad to hear him say so. With a small lamp his aunt lighted the way to his room.

"I say!" called 'Adrian from his apartment, when Roger had settled snug between the cool sheets, — "I say, Roger."

"Well?"

"We 'll go fishing to-morrow. I know a deep hole where we can get some dandy fat chubs."

"Good," called Roger, through his open door. "That will be sport."

He fell to listening to the dreamy chirp of the crickets and the trilling of the tree-toads. Gradually these sounds became fainter and fainter, and at last he could only hear them as if the insects were a score of miles away. Roger was sound asleep.

CHAPTER IV

IN DEEP WATER

THE sun was well up over the eastern hills, shining down warm and mellow on Cardiff valley when Roger awoke next morning. At first he could scarcely remember where he was, so many changes of location had he gone through lately. He looked at the old-fashioned wall paper, listened to the rustling of the wind in the trees, and wondered if he was not dreaming. Then he gradually recalled the events of the day before. He got out of bed with a jump, and was dressing when Adrian came in.

"Hello, Roger," was the greeting, "how 'd you sleep?"

"Fine," answered Roger.

Then Adrian looked at the clothes his cousin was putting on. It was the same suit Roger had worn when he arrived.

"Oh, I say," exclaimed Adrian. "Don't tog out in these. We 're going fishing, you know, and you 'll need your old duds to go through the woods with. You 'll spoil a good suit."

Then for the first time Roger realized that he did n't have to dress for school. He remembered that he was not going to study his lessons, and had only to go out into the air and sunshine, to listen to the birds, and to tramp through the fields. For the first time it came to him that,

even though he was not as well and strong as many other boys, there was a good time ahead of him, and a chance for him to become as sturdy as Adrian.

"That 's so, we are going fishing to-day," remarked Roger. "I 'd forgotten all about it, I slept so soundly. I thought I was back in New York."

He made haste to replace his good suit with an older though serviceable one, which would stand hard usage. Then the two boys went down to breakfast, which meal, Roger was sure, tasted even better than the supper of the night previous.

"Wa'al, what 's th' schedule fer t'day?" asked Mr. Kimball, as he gulped down his second cup of coffee. "You boys goin' arter b'ar er mountain lions?"

"Are there bears in these woods?" inquired Roger, eagerly.

"Mussy sakes, no!" exclaimed Mrs. Kimball, "but 't would n't be yer Uncle Bert ef he did n't fool some un. Skunks 'n' squirrels, 'n' onct in a while a wild-cat, is th' biggest beasts in these parts."

"Now, mother," began Mr. Kimball, his mouth half full of potato, "ye know there is b'ars in th' woods. Did n't ye run away from one last fall, when ye were pickin' blackberries? Now, own up, did n't ye?"

"Oh, thet one," answered Mrs. Kimball, as she set a plate of buckwheat cakes in front of Roger. "He was th' tame b'ar thet got away from th' Italian organ grinder."

"Scared ye most int' a spasm, though," commented Mr.

Kimball, laughing so heartily that he nearly choked on a piece of bread.

"Go along 'n' eat yer breakfust, 'n' git at th' chores," advised Mrs. Kimball, smiling a bit at the recollection of the incident.

"We 're going over to Limestone creek, fishing," said Adrian. "George Bennett was there yesterday and got fifteen chub."

"Got any bait?" asked Mr. Kimball.

"Going to dig some right away," replied Adrian, trying to make short work of the meal. Roger, too, was busy with the victuals.

"Now I don't know 'bout this," began Mr. Kimball with a grave air, in contrast to his former jolly tone. "Roger did n't come out here t' start right in 'n' tramp eight er ten miles, 'n' git all tired out. His mother 'n' father wants him t' rest up, 'n' git lots a' fresh air. Now, Ade, I don't know 's I ought t' let you two go. What d' ye say, Roger?"

"I don't feel at all tired," answered the boy. "I am not sure I could walk eight miles, but —"

"It 's less than two miles there, pop," broke in Adrian, "and, say, you need n't worry, but I 'll take care of Roger. We 'll walk slow."

"I guess I can tramp as far as the creek," put in Roger, feeling a little nettled that his physical ability should so often come up for discussion.

"Wa'al, all right," assented Mr. Kimball. "It 's a nice day, 'n' I guess it won't hurt ye none. Look out ye

don't fall in, that 's all. It 's deep near th' hole where th' best fishin' is."

" We 'll be careful," promised Adrian.

Breakfast over Adrian got out the fishing tackle and a spade with which to dig the worms for bait. Roger was provided with a bamboo pole and the necessary line, hooks, and sinkers. Then, when Adrian announced, after spading a good-sized patch of the barnyard up, that they had bait enough in the tin can, the two boys shouldered their poles and started off.

The way to the creek was along the main street of Cardiff, which ran through the centre of the village, up to the cross-road, that led eastward to the town of Lafayette. At this point the path went west, twisting and turning along the highway, over the hills to Onondaga Lake, twenty miles away. This was the first glimpse Roger had of the hamlet of Cardiff, except for the hasty glances as he had passed through on the stage the evening before. There were not more than sixty houses in the place, all comfortably close together, on the two sides of the main street.

Here and there, spread out along other roads, were scattered farms, with big, roomy, white houses and weather-stained barns and corn-cribs.

The boys passed over the little brook that ran across the road, just beyond Adrian's home, the stream being spanned by a wooden bridge. Soon they came to Hank Mack's general store, where you could buy a plow or a yard of red calico, a stick of candy or some gunpowder, a loaf of bread or a salt mackerel. Then there was the blacksmith shop,

in the door of which stood Sam Bennett, and, next, the grist mill, kept by Truem Wright, as jolly a chap as one would care to meet in the course of a day's travel. The last building, save some houses, before the boys came to the turn of the road, was the public inn or tavern, which bore the name "The Pine Tree. Abe Crownheart, Proprietor," in big faded blue letters over the door.

It was still early in the day, but nearly all the people in Cardiff seemed to be up and about. The men and women whom Adrian met nodded or spoke to him, and glanced rather curiously at Roger, for strangers were not common in town. A walk of half a mile brought the boys to the cross-road, and they went down that some distance before Adrian indicated the place where they were to cut across lots to reach the creek. Through the fields they went, most of the land they found themselves travelling over having been given up to the raising of corn, which was now gathered in shocks, ready to be husked, leaving the heavy brown stubble sticking out of the earth.

"Don't know 's we 'll have much luck to-day," said Adrian, rather dubiously, as he wet his finger and held it up in the air to note which side felt coolest, and so determine the direction of the breeze.

"Why not?"

"South wind."

"What 's that got to do with fishing?"

"Lots. Did n't you ever hear that? Why we never go fishing if the wind 's south. It was n't there when we started, but I guess it shifted. There 's a verse that says:

'When the wind 's in the west the fish bite best; when the wind 's in the south it blows the hook out their mouth.' But maybe we 'll get a few."

"I hope so, after all our work," said Roger.

"If I don't, it won't be the first time, for me," added Adrian, as though to prepare for the worst.

They tramped for half a mile more, and then, turning down a well-beaten path, Adrian led the way to an opening amid a grove of willow trees, along the edge of the creek. The stream, which was broad and deep here, curved around from a point, and formed an eddy that had eaten quite a distance into the bank. This eddy was used as a swimming hole by the boys of the village, but now the water was a little too cool for that sport, so the fish were not disturbed in what Adrian knew was one of their favorite haunts.

It did not take long to rig the lines on the poles, bait the hooks, and cast in. Though Roger never had much chance to go fishing in the city, the necessity of keeping quiet was apparent to him, and he moved about as slowly and as easily as he could, standing in a place Adrian had pointed out. Then he softly dropped the hook, with the wiggling, dangling worm, into the water. Adrian did likewise, and then the boys began to exercise that patience which all good fishermen are supposed to be blessed with.

Roger felt a little tired from the tramp, and, after he had stood for several minutes, he ventured to sit down on a piece of drift-wood that was on the edge of the bank. Adrian, not feeling the strain of walking, preferred to

stand. It was very quiet along the edge of the creek, screened as it was by the fringe of willows. Now and then a late-staying bird, that had not yet flown south, darted in and out among the trees. The dried cornstalks rustled in the wind, and there was a pleasant smell in the air. Altogether it was a most delightful place to fish.

"I 've got a bite," whispered Adrian, suddenly, and Roger noticed his cousin's line trembling and shaking just where it entered the water. "Watch me pull him out," went on Adrian softly.

The next instant he yanked his pole high in the air, and, dangling on the end of the line, twisting and flopping so that its silvery sides reflected the sun, was a good-sized fish. Roger leaped to his feet to see the catch, which his cousin landed on the ground with a thud. He started back to where the prize lay on the grassy bank, and then he felt something give way beneath him. He seemed to be falling down, and in desperation he clutched wildly at the air. He heard Adrian shouting, as though he was miles away, and the next he knew the waters of the creek closed above his head. A part of the bank where he had been sitting had broken off, and carried him into the stream with a splash of the deep water.

Roger thought he would never stop sinking down and down into the pool, and, though at this point it was only about ten feet deep, the boy imagined it must be three times that. He had kept hold of the pole when he fell, and he dimly knew that his hands still grasped it as he tried to strike out and spring to the surface. It was black

as night all around him, and the waters roared and sang in his ears.

For a half minute Adrian was so frightened by his cousin's disappearance he did not know what to do. He felt sure Roger would be drowned, and, already, he was charging himself with the responsibility for it.

Then a determination to save him came into the boy's mind. With a quick motion he peeled off his coat, cast aside his cap, and, with his knife, rapidly slit the laces of his shoes, as the easiest and most expeditious way of undoing them. He kicked the leathers from him, leaped to the edge of the bank, and was about to dive into the water when he saw Roger's head bob up.

"Don't be afraid!" called Adrian. "I'll save you!"

He poised for the spring, but, to his surprise, instead of seeing Roger helplessly floundering in the creek, he noticed that his cousin was calmly treading water to keep himself afloat, for it was hard to swim weighed down by clothes and shoes.

"Look out! Here I come!" cried Adrian.

"D-don't d-don't," stuttered Roger, his teeth chattering. He was a little out of breath. "I c-c-can get o-o-out a-all r-r-right! I was a l-l-little s-s-surprised a-at first!"

Adrian noticed that his cousin was making his way slowly toward more shallow water. When he got to a point half way to the bank Roger held up the fish pole, so that Adrian could grasp it. The latter saw the idea at once, and, with a quick motion, he took hold of the bamboo rod, and pulled his cousin along until it was an easy

matter for the boy to walk out. Roger stepped on the shelving bank, below the swimming hole, dripping water like a big Newfoundland dog. His breathing was rather uncertain, and his teeth chattered, for the water was cold.

"I thought at first you were a goner," said Adrian, grasping Roger's hand heartily. "I never imagined you could swim."

"I learned how in the free baths down at the Battery, in New York, where we fellows used to go Saturdays," explained Roger. "Only that 's salt water, and it 's easier to keep afloat in than this. I was n't scared after the first few seconds. It took me by surprise, and knocked the breath out of me, that 's all. I did n't know where I was for a little while."

"I don't blame you," agreed Adrian. "Well, I guess that 'll be about all the fishing to-day," he went on. "You 'd better hurry home with me, and get dry clothes on, so you won't catch cold. If it was July instead of October it would n't matter so much. So come on; let 's run for it."

They started off across the fields at a smart trot, and soon reached the road. They got there just as a man came along, driving a light wagon.

"It 's Enberry Took, who lives right below us," explained Adrian. "He 'll give us a lift. Hey, Enberry!"

"Whoa!" exclaimed the man in the wagon, pulling the horse up. "Been fishin', boys, or swimmin'?" he asked as he looked at Roger dripping water, and at the solitary

fish Adrian carried. Then Mr. Took smiled grimly, perhaps suspecting what had happened.

"We 've been doing a little of both," explained Adrian. "Can we ride home with you, Enberry? This is my cousin, Roger, from New York. He 's here on a visit."

"Hop in," invited Mr. Took, shortly, and, when the two boys were settled in the bottom of the wagon, he whipped up his horse, which trotted over the ground in good shape. Almost before Roger and Adrian knew it they were at the gate of their house, greatly surprising Mrs. Kimball and amusing her husband, who laughed heartily when he learned there was no harm done.

"You 'll make out all right," he said to Roger, as the boy went to change his wet clothes for dry ones; "you 've got a level head on your shoulders, even if ye do live in New York. I 'm proud on ye, thet 's what I am; I 'm proud on ye, Roger."

CHAPTER V

GATHERING THE HONEY

WHETHER it was the country air, or the exercise Roger took after his sudden bath, he did not know, but he felt no ill effects from the plunge into the creek, nor did he catch cold. There was merry laughter over the affair when he came downstairs dressed in a dry suit, and, on Mr. Kimball's suggestion, the boys decided they had gone through enough excitement for one day.

"I would think Roger needed a rest," said Clara.

"Ef ye ain't got nothin' else t' do this arternoon, Ade," said Mr. Kimball, "ye might git off some a' th' clover honey. I 'm goin' t' send a load a' stuff t' Syracuse in th' mornin', 'n' I 'll want some honey t' take 'long."

"Would you like to help at that?" asked Adrian of Roger. "It 's easy work."

"I guess so," replied Roger, who thought it would be interesting to see how the busy little bees worked and made the sweet stuff he had eaten the first night he came. So the boys made their preparations after dinner, which was soon served.

Mr. Kimball had about two hundred swarms, or hives, of bees, the little houses for the insects being arranged in rows in an orchard just south of the farm dwelling. The

honey crop had been nearly all gathered in when Roger came, but some of the later swarms were still busy filling up the "caps" with the sweet juices of flowers. Adrian got out two big straw hats, around the edges and coming down on all sides of which was mosquito netting like a long veil. He put on one hat and gave the other to Roger.

"What 's it for?" asked the city boy.

"To keep you from getting stung."

"But," began Roger, his ardor cooling as he thought for the first time of the chances of being nipped by the bees, "is n't it dangerous to go out among the hives, even with these veils on?"

"Not a bit," replied Adrian.

But when he saw his cousin heading for the midst of the collection of hives, Roger became somewhat apprehensive, in spite of the assurance. He hung back a bit.

"There won't be any danger for you," said Adrian, observing his hesitation. "I 'll put you in a safe place, but if a buzzer or two does come singing around you once in a while just keep perfectly still and it won't hurt you. In fact it can't get at you with the veil on. You can have a pair of gloves, too, so every part of you will be protected. Come on."

Thus assured, though still a trifle doubtful, Roger advanced. As they walked along the path to the orchard Roger noticed that Adrian carried what looked like a big funnel, on the bottom or large part of which was a leather bellows.

"What 's that for?" he asked.

"To smoke the bees."

"Smoke the bees?"

"Yes; you 'll see in a minute."

On the edge of the apiary was a tool house and another building where the honey and bee hives were stored in for winter, for here in the north bees cannot exist through the cold weather out of doors. Entering the tool house Adrian collected some small pieces of wood and some shavings, and built a little fire in the tin funnel, to which the bellows was attached, using the folded leather arrangement to make a good draught.

Adjusting his hat so that the mosquito netting veil hung down all around his head, Adrian started out with the smoke-machine trailing a fleecy cloud behind him.

"Come on," he called to Roger, handing him a pair of gloves. "Put these on. They 're rubber, you see, and the bees can't put their stingers through them."

"Where 's yours?" asked Roger, as he drew the gauntlets well over his wrists.

"Oh, I could n't take off honey in gloves. They 'd be too clumsy. But I seldom get stung barehanded, and if I do I don't mind one or two. Got used to 'em. A little ammonia on the sting takes the pain out."

He kept on toward the cluster of hives, and Roger could not help noticing how much his cousin seemed like a diver, with the big head piece on. He, himself, must look the same, he thought.

"You see," explained Adrian, as he saw Roger glancing curiously at the rows of bee houses, "each hive is divided

into two parts, top and bottom. In the lower part the bees live, raise their young, and store honey in what we call the big sections. These are beeswax combs, set in light wooden frames. In the top part of the hive are several smaller, square, wooden frames, into which the bees build the comb and fill it with honey. When they have these upper sections filled and capped up, or sealed over, we lift them off and sell them."

"It 's rather rough on the bees," observed Roger.

"We always leave them enough," explained Adrian.

As he talked Adrian approached the bee colonies.

"You 'd better stay back, now, under that tree," he called to Roger, and the latter was glad enough not to be asked to go any nearer the hives, from which he could hear a busy, droning hum. He much preferred to watch Adrian from this vantage point.

He saw his cousin come up to one of the bee houses from the rear. First the top cover was carefully lifted off, and this was set on the ground, edge up. Next Adrian lifted up a piece of oilcloth that kept all possible dampness from the honey. As soon as this was moved aside Roger saw a black moving mass of bees crawling upward. Adrian quickly took the smoker and puffed a gentle white cloud of vapor on the insects. In an instant they melted away, scurrying downward. The smoke irritated them and made them drowsy, and they wanted to get away from its smarting vapor. This made it safe for any one to work about the hive, under the protection of fumes from the burning wood.

This left free the upper section of the hive, which was filled with caps full of the clear white, or darker buckwheat honey, the bees being below. Adrian then lifted off the whole top part of the little house, and Roger could see that it contained a number of the full caps, in this case there being only the white clover honey. Setting his load down on top of the hive next to him, Adrian replaced the cover on the first hive. Then he puffed several more clouds of smoke on the top section he had just removed, to drive away the few remaining bees that were loath to leave their property.

Adrian carried the section, which contained twenty-four small caps, to the bee house, and returned to repeat the operation on other hives. Roger looked on with much interest as Adrian worked rapidly.

"Got stung yet?" he called to his busy cousin.

"One nipped me on the finger a bit, but I don't mind that. I'm used to it. Are they bothering you?"

"Well," answered Roger, moving his head from side to side, "some of 'em seem anxious to make my acquaintance, but the veil keeps 'em away. All the same they make me nervous."

"We'll soon go inside," called back Adrian. "I'm only going to take off a few more. Then we'll box it and be through."

He removed half a dozen more hive-tops, with the honey-filled sections, each one containing twenty-four pounds of the sweet stuff, a pound to a cap. Then, when he had given the few bees that got in the storehouse a chance to

escape, Adrian prepared to pack the honey for market. To do this it was first necessary to scrape from each wooden cap, or the small, one-pound honey boxes, the beeswax that, here and there, marred the clean white wood. Roger wanted to help at this, and, as he could do it safely, Adrian got two dull knives, and he and his cousin began.

"Be sure to keep the caps standing on the same end they are on now," cautioned Adrian.

"Why? What difference does it make?"

"A good deal. If you change 'em around any, and there happens to be some cells that are n't capped over, the honey will run out."

Then Adrian showed Roger that the honey-comb, which is familiar to almost every one, was composed of a number of openings or cells, shaped like a hexagon. These cells were double, there being two sets of them, back and front, in each cap, and they were divided down the middle by a wall of wax. The wise bees gave to each cell a downward slant toward this dividing wall, so that when they had filled them with honey the sweet stuff would not run out. Then, as a further precaution, each tiny opening was sealed over with wax. But sometimes the bees neglected to seal up one or two cells in a cap, and unless these particular ones were kept upright, with the openings slanting downward, there would be a fine mess.

"These caps are pretty well sealed," observed Adrian, "but you always have to be careful," and he was on the lookout to see that no mistakes were made.

The two boys now busied themselves with scraping off

the dried wax from the outside of the caps, and, as each one was finished it was placed in a pasteboard box, labelled with the contents "White clover honey," and with Mr. Kimball's name and address.

"Dad 's got a good honey crop this year," commented Adrian. "Plenty of white clover, which sells better than buckwheat, though I don't like it so well as the dark honey."

"What do they call it buckwheat for? Because it 's made from buckwheat flour?"

"Land no. Because it 's from the sweet juices of the buckwheat flowers. Lots of people say buckwheat honey is too strong for 'em, but we all like it better than clover, which is made from clover blossoms. Buckwheat seems to have a sort of 'whang' to it, dad says."

"Wa'al, boys, how ye makin' out?" asked a deep voice from the doorway, and Mr. Kimball entered the storeroom.

"All right, I guess," answered Roger.

"Glad t' hear it. We 'll make a reg'lar bee-farmer out a' ye 'fore ye git home."

He carefully inspected the boys' work and seemed satisfied with it.

"I guess that 'll do fer this trip," he remarked to Adrian, counting the caps. "Say, Ade," he went on, "how 'd you 'n' Roger like t' take a load a' grapes over t' Tully t'-morrow? Andrews wrote me he could use some."

"I thought you were going to take the horses to the city with your load," replied Adrian.

"So I be, but I 'll borrow Truem Wright's hoss 'n' wagon ef ye think ye kin git over Tully hill 'ith th' rig. I 'd send Jim, th' hired man, only I want him t' pick grapes t'-morrow when I 'm gone. What d' ye say? Want t' go?"

"Do you?" asked Adrian of Roger.

"I think it would be lots of fun," replied the city boy. "I 'll be glad to go along."

"All right, dad; you go and ask Truem for the horse, and to-night Roger and I 'll load up the wagon so 's to start early in the morning," said Adrian.

"Are n't you boys hungry?" asked some one standing in the doorway, and they all looked up to see Clara with a big plate of freshly baked molasses cookies.

"Hungry? Well, I just guess we are," exclaimed Adrian, as he held the plate and passed it to Roger, who took a cake. Adrian helped himself to two, and Mr. Kimball was not satisfied with less than three, which he munched successively with every indication of satisfaction.

"No use talkin'," he said, looking at Roger with a twinkle in his blue eyes, "your aunt does bake the best cookies in Onondaga County," and he took a fourth one, while Clara laughed merrily to see her father's enjoyment of the little lunch she had provided.

"They are certainly fine," agreed Roger, finishing his second one.

The plate was soon emptied, and Clara offered to go for more, but they all voted they had enough for the present. Then Mr. Kimball cut open one of the caps of

honey, and he and the boys ate the sweet stuff, which, a short time before had been in the hive.

"Don't you want some?" asked Roger of Clara, offering her a thick slice of the comb.

"No, thank you," she replied. "I've eaten so much this last month I'm afraid I'll turn into a bee," and she hurried back to the house with a ringing laugh.

It was only four o'clock when the honey had all been packed ready for shipment, and Mr. Kimball left to make arrangements for the trip to-morrow. Adrian, for whom there was no more work that afternoon, proposed to Roger that they take a walk to Truem Wright's grist mill. So they tramped up the street to where the mill stood on the edge of a pond.

They met quite a number of boys and girls carrying tin pails and books, and most of the youngsters spoke to Adrian as he passed them.

"Where are they from?" asked Roger.

"School's out."

"Oh, sure enough. I'd almost forgotten there was such a thing. But don't you go?"

"Not until winter sets in," said Adrian. "You see there's too much to do about the farm, and then I'm pretty well along in what they teach here. They're going to have a higher class for the older pupils in January, and I'll start in then."

The boys soon came to the mill.

"Hello, Ade!" cried a man, who seemed to be covered from head to foot with white dust. "Heard ye went

fishin' yist'day," he went on. "Ketched a whale, did n't ye?" and he laughed so heartily that he almost shook the side of the building.

"Well, we did have some such luck," admitted Adrian. "But, say, Truem, can we come in? Are you running now? This is my cousin Roger, from New York."

"He were th' whale I were referrin' t'," said Mr. Wright, laughing again.

Roger smiled and bowed to the dusty miller, who held out a huge white hand for him to shake.

"Yep, come right in," said Mr. Wright, genially. "I 'm grindin' a bit a' flour fer George Bennett."

The boys advanced into the dusty place, which shook and trembled with the whirring vibrations of the two big millstones. They watched these spinning around, grinding the wheat into a fine, light dust.

"What power does he use?" asked Roger, who was somewhat surprised to see no sign of an engine.

"Turbine water wheel," said Adrian. "Come along and I 'll show you." He led the way to where, at the bottom of a deep pit, the turbine roared around and around with the weight and force of the water that fell on it from above, a dam giving the necessary head. This furnished the power for the entire mill. It was all very interesting to Roger, who had never seen anything of the kind. Before he realized how quickly time passed, it was almost the hour for supper, so he and Adrian raced home, both bearing good appetites.

CHAPTER VI

A LOAD OF GRAPES

When the boys reached the house they found Mrs. Kimball just putting supper on the table. There was a delicious smell, which Roger at first did not recognize.

"Hurrah!" cried Adrian. "That 's what I like!"

"What?"

"Fried chicken and corn bread. Can't anybody beat mother at that."

"Nor at anything else in the cooking line, I guess," agreed Roger.

The two boys made short work of washing up and combing their hair, and when they hurried down to the kitchen they had hungry looks that did Mrs. Kimball good to see.

"I can't abide a poor eater," she said, as she heaped Roger's plate with the crisp brown chicken, fried in sweet butter, and handed him a plate of smoking hot golden-yellow corn bread. "I do like t' see a body pitch in 'n' eat th' victuals set afore 'em," she went on. "After a body goes t' work 'n' gits up a good meal, it 's mighty disparagin' t' see th' things scorned down on. I 'm glad t' see ye eat, Roger. Yer appetite 's improved wonderful already. Yer uncle 'n' cousin usually don't need much

urgin' in th' eatin' line," she added significantly, as she glanced at her husband's and son's well-heaped plates.

"I guess not," mumbled Mr. Kimball, picking up a nicely browned wing, and munching it with every indication of enjoyment. "I guess not, Mrs. Kimball."

Clara and her mother now sat down, and the meal progressed merrily. Roger almost forgot the homesickness that had twinged him once or twice during the day. The supper was about over when some one knocked at the kitchen door, opening it at the same time and calling out:

"I brought your mail, neighbor Kimball."

"Thanks, Enberry," said the farmer, as he got up to take several letters which Mr. Took had brought from the post-office. "Won't ye set down 'n' hev a bite, Enberry?"

"No, thanks; got t' do my chores yit. How 's th' drowned boy?"

"Oh, I 'm all right," called out Roger, "and I 'm much obliged for getting me home so quick."

"Allers willin' t' do a neighborly turn," said Mr. Took, as he went out.

"Hello!" exclaimed Roger's uncle, looking at the addresses on the envelopes by the light of the kerosene lamp, "Hello! Here 's a letter for you, Mr. Roger Anderson."

"It 's from mother," cried the boy, as he caught sight of the beloved writing, and for a few minutes he paid no attention to what went on around him, as he read the news from the dear ones at home. It told him all were well, and how they missed him greatly.

"Take good care of yourself," Mrs. Anderson wrote, "and, though I shall miss you very much, though we all miss you, we hope your visit to Cardiff will do you good."

There was a little mist in the boy's eyes as he saw, in memory, the pleasant little circle about the table at home; his father reading, his mother sewing, and the baby building a wonderful house of blocks.

"Wa'al, what 's th' news?" asked Mr. Kimball, in his deep hearty voice, and Roger told him what his mother had written.

It was not long before supper was over, and, while Mrs. Kimball and Clara were clearing away the dishes, Roger, with his uncle and cousin, went out to the barn, where, by the light of a lantern, the two wagons were loaded up, ready for an early start on the next day's trip. Mr. Kimball was to take his own horses and wagon to Syracuse with a load of produce, while Roger and Adrian would have Truem Wright's rig.

The last basket of grapes, the last crate of honey, and the celery, potatoes, and cabbage had been piled securely on the vehicles. Mr. Kimball pulled out his big silver watch.

"Hello!" he cried. "Nine o'clock. Time to go t' bed, fer we 'll hev t' be up early in th' mornin'. Skedaddle, all on ye!"

The boys hurried to the house, laughing and shouting in anticipation of the pleasant trip next day.

That night Roger dreamed he was swimming in a big green pond, while a swarm of bees carrying bunches of

grapes flew buzzing after him. He thought a whole hive of the insects were about to settle down on him, when he was caught by a big fish that shook him in its mouth as a dog might a rat. Then he awoke suddenly to find that the shaking was being done by his cousin Adrian, who stood bending over him, pulling him by the arm. A lamp burned in the room.

"What 's the matter? Is the house afire?" asked Roger, as he jumped up in alarm.

"Land sakes, no," said Adrian, "but if we 're going to Tully with the grapes, we 'll have to start pretty soon. Dad went some time ago. Dress, and we'll have breakfast."

Roger looked out of the window while putting his clothes on. It was just getting faintly light, and some stars were still to be seen. From the kitchen there came the good smell of hot coffee and buckwheat cakes with fried sausage, and Roger knew his aunt was up.

While the boys were eating the excellent breakfast Mrs. Kimball set on the table, she put them up a good lunch in a basket, as they would not be home to dinner. In a short time they were ready for the start, and the wagon clattered out the side yard, Adrian driving the big white horse.

It was a pleasant trip to Tully, a town about eight miles from Cardiff. The first part of the journey was along the valley road, but at the upper end of this there began an ascent, which led up a steep hill to a sort of plateau on the small mountain top.

Past the scattered farmhouses they drove in the early

dawn, and they had proceeded nearly a mile before the sun peeped up smiling from behind the hills, to send the gray, misty fog swirling lazily upward. The white horse pulled nobly up the incline, stopping now and then to rest at the "thank-'e-ma'ams," as certain places in the road were called; being mounds of earth dug across the highway, designed to prevent the too sudden rush of water down the hill during a rain. These hummocks served to divert the water to one side like a gutter, and also made good resting places, for they held the rear wheels of the wagon. At length the boys reached the top of the hill and started off on a level stretch for Tully, where Andrews Brothers had a store, at which Mr. Kimball sold considerable produce.

James Andrews, one of the brothers, was arranging some barrels of apples outside the place when Adrian drove up.

"Good morning, Mr. Andrews," called Adrian.

"Same to you," replied the store-keeper, heartily. "What brings you over here so early?"

"I 've got that load of grapes you ordered of my father."

"Load of grapes?" with a puzzled air.

"Yes. Father got your letter, and he did n't have time to come over himself to-day, so I made the trip."

"But I did n't order any grapes — Oh, yes, I did, come to think of it; but, Ade, I did n't want 'em until next week. I said so in my letter. Let 's see, to-day is the 18th. I ordered 'em for the 26th. Can't possibly use 'em this week, for I 've got all I need. Sorry," as he saw

the disappointed look on the boy's face. "Just tell your father if he looks at my letter he 'll see I asked him to send a load over next week. Better try some of the other stores, they might need 'em."

"Well," said Adrian, slowly, "I s'pose you 're right, Mr. Andrews, and father must have read your letter wrong. So I guess the only thing to do is to try to get rid of this load over at Smith's or Brown's."

"Don't forget I 'll want some a week from to-day," cautioned Mr. Andrews as Adrian drove off. "Be sure and tell your father."

"I will," called back Adrian.

Two rather sober-faced boys watched the white horse slowly jog along the Tully street. They had expected to unload the grapes, get the money and have a nice drive back, taking their time. But the wrong date had upset their plans. However there was a chance that Mr. Brown or Mr. Smith might need grapes, and the prospect of selling their produce there brightened matters for a little while. But their hopes were soon shattered, for, at both places, the supply of this fruit was large enough to last several days, though both proprietors said they would be in the market next week.

"Well," said Roger, slowly, as they turned about from a visit to the last store, "I suppose the only thing to do is to go back home."

"What? And with this load of grapes unsold?" exclaimed Adrian. "Not much! I came to Tully to sell them, and I 'm going to do it."

"How?"

"By peddling them from house to house. Dad expects me back with the money for these, and I 'm going to bring it if I can. You need n't help if you don't want to. I suppose you 're not used to peddling, but I 've done it before."

"Well, I guess I will help," replied Roger, a little hurt to think that his cousin felt he would n't stand by him in an emergency. "Here, we 'll drive along, and I 'll take one side of the street, and you can go on the other."

"That 'll be just the thing," said Adrian.

So the two boys started in to get rid of the fruit. They went from house to house, carrying the baskets with the covers off to show the big red, white, and purple clusters. They inquired politely of the villagers whether they did n't need some freshly picked grapes, at ten or fifteen cents a basket, and, before they had been in half a dozen places each one had sold four. The bony old white horse jogged slowly along the road, contentedly stopping now and then to nibble a sweet bunch of grass.

At first Roger was a little bashful about going to houses peddling, for he had never done that sort of thing before. But he soon got the knack of it, and, though at several places the old ladies said they thought they wanted no fruit that day, he did n't mind the refusals. Adrian had good luck on his side of the road, and sold many baskets. By noon they had gone over all of the main and only street in Tully, and had disposed of a little more than half the load.

"I guess we can't sell any more here," said Adrian as he counted over his money.

"What 'll we do? Go back home?"

"No, I guess we 'll push on to Dagman's Corners. That 's only four miles farther, and we can peddle some on the way. But, come to think of it, I 'm hungry. Ain't you?"

"A little bit," admitted Roger with a laugh.

So the boys drove a short way out of the village, and pulled the white horse up along side of a grassy bank. After Adrian had fixed the oats, which they had brought with them, so that the patient nag could eat, he opened the lunch his mother had put up for him and Roger. There was a clear spring of water near by, and from this the boys and the horse drank. It was like a picnic instead of work, Roger thought, as he breathed in the pure, cool air, and felt his cheeks glowing in the October sun.

The meal over they took a brief rest, and then resumed the trip. In the next village they succeeded in disposing of all the remaining grapes, the dusty miller of the town taking the last four baskets. Thus, with about fifteen dollars snugly tucked away in his pocket, Adrian felt that he and Roger had accomplished something worth while, for he had received a little higher price for the fruit by peddling it around than if he had sold it to Mr. Andrews, who would have paid wholesale rates, while the boys had done business at retail.

"I don't call this bad," commented Adrian as he turned the horse for the journey home.

"I should say not," agreed Roger, heartily.

It was the first time he had ever taken an active part

in any real business transactions, and it made him want to do more in that line when he saw how self-reliant Adrian had been in the trading.

When the boys reached Tully on the return trip it was five o'clock. They had eight miles to drive, but, as Adrian knew the road, he did n't mind the gathering darkness, though to Roger it seemed strange, for he had never driven in the country after nightfall. In the city it was very light after dark, but here in Cardiff it was almost as black as ink when twilight had faded, for there were no street lamps to dispel the gloom.

It was mostly down-hill going now, and the old white horse, knowing his stable and a manger full of oats was ahead of him, jogged rapidly along. It grew darker and darker, until, when they reached the top of the long slope of Tully hill, the last vestige of the slanting rays of the sun disappeared, and night had settled down. Calling cheerfully to the horse Adrian whistled a merry tune, and Roger joined in. Then they talked of various topics, — of the success of their trip, and what they would do to-morrow and next day.

"That 's the last house in the village of Tully," said Adrian, suddenly, indicating a lonely cabin. "Pete Hallenbeck lives there, but he can't be home to-night, or there 'd be a light in the window. He 's lived all alone since his wife died. After we pass this there 's not a place where anybody lives for three miles, until we get to the edge of Cardiff."

They went along for a mile or so, whistling and singing.

Suddenly there was a jolt of the wagon, and Roger, who was sitting well toward the front of the seat, felt himself thrown forward with considerable force. Instinctively he stuck out his hands, and he felt them strike the broad haunches of the horse. Then, with a rattle and bang he kept on falling down until he had rolled out completely on the animal's back, and thence off to one side, into the soft grass along the road, where he lay stunned.

He could hear, as in a dream, Adrian faintly shouting to him, and then something seemed to flash by him. There was a confused rattle and rumble that grew fainter and fainter, and the blackness became more intense.

As if he was falling fast asleep he heard a voice calling: "Roger! Roger!"

Then his eyes seemed to close tightly and he knew nothing more, as he lay in a huddled heap on the ground.

CHAPTER VII

LOST ON THE MOUNTAIN

Roger seemed to be sinking down into some dark pit, falling lower and lower, until he appeared to strike against something and bound upward. A myriad of stars danced before his eyes, and, as he thus floated upward, he instinctively put up his hands to avoid contact with whatever might be above him. Then, with a suddenness that startled him, he came to his senses and found himself sitting at the side of the road, in the damp grass, while all around was pitchy blackness.

He rubbed his eyes and the back of his head, and he was somewhat alarmed when his hand came away wet with blood from a slight wound. He tried to stand, but found he was too tottery on his legs.

"Well," he managed to say, "there must have been an accident. I fell off the wagon, that 's sure, and from the way my head feels I must have struck on a stone. Guess I cut myself too, but not badly," as he failed to find any serious wound on his scalp.

He rubbed his hands in the damp grass and drew them out dripping with dew. He dabbled this water on his forehead and felt better.

"I think the horse must have run away," he went on, "or else I 'd see something of Adrian by this time, though it 's as dark as a pocket here, and hard enough to locate your hand before your face, let alone somebody away down the road."

Roger listened intently, but could catch no sound of rattling wheels, nor the beating of a horse's hoofs, which might have indicated that the wagon was coming back. All about was silence and darkness. The boy tried again to stand up, and found that his momentary weakness had passed.

"I guess I 'd better walk on until I meet Adrian," he said to himself. "He 'll be sure to be coming back soon," and he started off in the direction he thought was toward Cardiff.

Now if Roger had lived all his life in the country, or if he had been more familiar with the road, he probably would have had no trouble in starting on the right way back home. Very likely he would have done so instinctively; or he might have gotten his bearings from the stars, which shone overhead, though somewhat dimly. As it was, he became confused in the darkness, and, owing to a slight dizziness caused by his fall, instead of going toward Cardiff, he began walking back toward Tully.

He was a little sore and stiff at first, but, as he went on, this disappeared, and he stepped out briskly enough. He thought he would not have far to go before meeting his cousin, but, as he walked farther and farther, he commenced to wonder what had become of Adrian. But

then, he reassured himself, perhaps Adrian had had some trouble in bringing the old white horse to a stop, though the animal had not seemed to be such a mettlesome steed.

"But I 'll meet him soon, now," said Roger, trying to comfort himself.

He could feel the soft dusty road under his feet, and its whiteness was like a big indistinct chalk mark on a large blackboard, as it came faintly through the darkness. But, somehow or other, in a little while the white mark seemed to be fading away. It grew so dim that even by the hardest squinting of the eyes, it could no longer be seen. It appeared also that the character of the road was changing. It was no longer dusty and soft, but hard, and firm, and, instead of going down hill, Roger found himself ascending the grade.

"Hold on!" exclaimed the boy, "this is queer. I must have turned around."

He came to a sudden stop. Was he off the road? Was he lost? He hurriedly searched through his pockets and found a single match. Here was something that would aid him, though ever so slightly. With unsteady fingers he struck the little fire-stick. It flared up, sputtered and flickered, and, a second later, blazed brightly. Holding it above his head, so the glow might light all around him, he peered about in the gloom which was but faintly illuminated by the tiny flame.

What was his terror to see, on every side of him, a tall and thick undergrowth of bushes and lofty trees. Beneath his feet was a narrow path, while the forest appeared

to meet above his head in a black arch. Then, with a start, he realized he was lost; lost on the mountain, lost in the dense woods about Cardiff. He did not know which way to turn.

Now if Roger had been an older boy or a sturdy country lad, he would have laughed at the plight in which he found himself, — laughed a bit and then tramped on and sat down, to wait until morning. But, as it was, Roger was never more frightened in his life. Once he had been lost in New York, when he was a little chap. But a big policeman had picked him up and taken him to a precinct station-house, where he was kept until his father, missing him, came after the lost boy.

But out here in the country there were no blue-coated officers on the lookout for lost people. There were no police stations, no street lights, no lights at all, in fact, save the little flicker that had died away when Roger's single match went out.

When the last spark had become dim the boy's breath came with a gasp. He wanted to run away from the blackness, but where could he flee to escape it, for it was all about him. He felt like crying out; like shouting for help. Then he suddenly recalled something his father had once said to him.

"Roger, if you ever find yourself in danger, in a fire, or in any position where you feel you 'll lose your presence of mind, just stop, and count ten. Then you 'll be able to think calmly, and be able to help yourself, and perhaps others."

This came back to the boy like a flash. He resolved to put it into practice. Slowly he counted — 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10. He said each number in a loud voice. Even hearing his own tones did him good, and, before he had reached the "nine" he felt himself growing calmer. At the end he was less frightened, and he could think more clearly. Then he began to reason, and before he knew it, he was turning a plan over in his mind.

"I must have branched off the road into a path that goes through the woods," he said, "and, at the same time, I must have got turned around, and gone up hill, instead of down. Now let's see. If I turn back and walk in just the opposite direction from which I'm facing now, and if I am careful to keep going down hill, and stay in this path until I strike the road again, I'll probably come out safely. So, then, right about face! Forward, march!" He executed the command and started off bravely in the other direction.

Roger now went along more slowly. He was cautious about where he set his feet, that he might not stray from the path, and occasionally he stooped down, and with his hands he felt the dirt under foot, to be positive he was on the hard, packed path and not travelling over the wood-carpet. He was in better spirits now and was sure he was going back the right way. He even began to whistle a little tune and already saw himself safe in his uncle's house, laughing with Adrian over their adventure.

But when he had gone on for some time in this way, there came over him a nameless sense of disquietude.

After all, was he really retracing his steps, or was he advancing deeper into the woods? If he had a match or two he could have easily seen his position. But he had not one. However, he reflected, the nature of the ground he was travelling over might now be of assistance to him. He leaned over again to feel of the way. As he did so he brushed against some low-hanging branches of the trees, and then, when his hand came in contact with the earth, Roger was startled to find it met neither the hard packed clay of the path, nor the dust of the road, but the dead leaves, the little twigs and broken limbs of trees, and the soft moss of the forest.

Now, indeed, he knew he was fairly lost, and, when he stopped, and listened intently, he heard, all around him, the rustle of the foliage, the creaking of the boughs and the rattle of the branches of the deep woods. He had now absolutely no sense of direction, no knowledge of which way to turn. He caught his breath with a gasp, and then, feeling his legs giving way beneath him, he put out his hands, which came sharply up against a tree trunk, as he sank down on a fallen log.

For a few minutes Roger thought the fierce beating of his heart would smother him. Then, realizing he must play the man now, he shut his lips firmly, clenched his hands, and stared determinedly into the blackness that was all around him.

"What a baby I am," he said. "All I have to do is to sit here until it's light. Then I can easily get back into the path, or some one will find me. That's what

I 'll do. I 'll not move from this spot until I can see where I am going."

So he made himself as comfortable as possible on the log, turned up his coat collar, for it was cold, braced his back against the tree, and made ready to sit out his vigil until morning. His first fear over, he now looked upon the occurrence as a sort of queer little adventure.

"It will be something to write to mother about," he said, as he pulled his hat on tightly.

For perhaps half an hour the boy sat there. He thought of all sorts of things, — of his father, of his mother, and his little brother at home — of how he had come to Cardiff. He went over all that he and Adrian had done since he arrived.

Then he began to nod; a little at first, then more and more, until he caught himself falling forward, almost asleep.

"My, my! I must n't go off like this," he said, rubbing his eyes. "It won't do to take a snooze here."

For a time he fought off the drowsiness, only to find it coming over him more and more strongly. Oh, how nice it was out here in the woods. There was a gentle wind, the leaves seemed to rustle and whisper to him. Ah! He was floating away — away — off — off — to the land — of nod — to — the — land — of — nod — the — land — of — nod — nod — nod!

Then! Roger was fast asleep!

No! Not asleep! He was on the verge. Just going to tumble over into the finest feather bed he ever knew,

when there was a noise that sounded like a clap of thunder.

Crash!

Roger sat up, clutching the tree, against which he leaned, with a grip of terror. His heart was going like a trip-hammer. There was the echo of a great roaring in his ears. For a second he could not tell where he was. Then came another noise, less loud.

Snap!

Ah! It was only the breaking of a twig. He calmed down. But what did it mean? Somebody must be coming to find him. Of course, that was it. Adrian and his father were searching.

Roger leaped to his feet. He peered into the darkness.

"Here I am, Adrian!" he called. "Here I am! Hey! Here's Roger!"

The echo of his own cry was the only answer. Then came another crackle of the twigs, as if some one was approaching nearer. Roger strained his eyes into the black depths of the forest. He could make out nothing.

Then, as he kept his gaze fixed on one spot, he saw something which seemed to chill his heart. It was two small balls of greenish-red fire, and they looked right at him. At the same time there came to the boy's ears the sound of an angry snarl.

CHAPTER VIII

FIGHTING A WILD-CAT

For one fearful moment Roger felt a cold chill go creeping down his spine, and he shivered in dread at the nameless thing which stood growling there before him. He knew it must be some kind of a wild beast, but what he hardly dared think.

"A bear!" he whispered, and he shrank closer against the tree. Then he recalled what his aunt had said when Mr. Kimball had joked about the denizens of the forest. She said there were no bears.

"Nothing worse than wild-cats," he remembered she had told him, and, though to the frightened boy this was terrible enough, he was glad to know it was not a bear which he could dimly see the outline of.

The thing, whatever it was, kept up its short, angry snarls, and Roger could hear the sharp claws tearing at the bark of the fallen log. He gazed at the two circles of greenish-red fire in a sort of fascination.

Just then the whole forest seemed to be flooded with a soft light that stole in among the trees and sifted down through the leaves. It was the moon that had risen high enough above the hills to give its illumination to the scene. By the glowing beams Roger could make out the animal

about fifteen feet from him, crouching low on a fallen tree. It was a beast perhaps two feet long, with a tail that swished from side to side, and it had little short ears that seemed pointed toward him, to catch the sound of any movement he might make. He could see the paws with which the wild-cat, for such he knew it must be, held its position on the log, by digging the knife-like claws into the soft bark. He could see the little chips and slivers fly off, while the growls changed to a half-whining cry.

For a moment the boy looked about in desperation, seeking which way to flee. Off to the left he seemed to observe a little larger opening between the trees than anywhere else. He sprang toward it with a bound.

Ere he had gone a dozen steps, stumbling in the half darkness over sticks and stones, the wild-cat turned quickly, and with a light leap was before him, waiting, waiting, waiting. The boy stopped short with a shudder. He was very much afraid. Though the beast was not large, and though it did not impress him half as much as did the tigers and lions he had seen in Central Park, yet there was something terrifying in the calm way it faced him.

It appeared to know there was nothing between itself and the defenceless boy, and that no help was at hand. Though the beast was not half as big as Roger, he knew the sharp claws and sharper teeth would cause death, if once the animal got up courage enough to attack him. That this was its intention the boy had no doubt, though he was sure the wild-cats to be found in the mountains about Cardiff were more a danger and menace to chickens and lambs

than to human beings. The brutes were usually too cowardly to attack man. But perhaps the night, the smallness of the boy and his apparent terror had made the cat devoid of fear. At any rate, it seemed to Roger to be ugly and bold enough to spring at him any minute.

Foiled in his plan to escape, the boy returned to the log where he had been sitting. This was close against a big tree, and he felt that, with his back to this, he was, in some measure, protected; at least from an attack in the rear. As he retraced his steps the cat kept pace with him, until both boy and beast were in the same relative positions they had first occupied.

Roger now saw that it was to be a battle between himself and the wild-cat, and he nerved himself for the fight. Had he dared, he would have turned and run, but he seemed to see the cat come bounding after him, with big leaps and jumps, and crouching for a final spring upon his back. Then he recalled, with a shudder, what he had read of the terrible tearing power of the claws of these animals. So there was but one thing to do with any hope of success. That was to stand and fight off the beast as long as possible. But what weapons had he? He hurriedly felt in his pockets and all he could find was a small knife, which he knew would be of little use when it came to close quarters. A stick, a club, or a stone would be of more service. Yes, that would be better; a club, so Roger stooped down, and while he kept his eyes fastened on the cat he groped about on the ground with his hands to see what was there. He felt his fingers close over a stout cudgel, and he rose, grasp-

ing it firmly, and stood with his feet braced for the shock. He was less frightened now that he had some sort of a weapon, poor as it was, and he knew he could meet the attack on more even terms.

And it was high time he had thus prepared, for the cat now crouched lower than before on the log and its claws worked more quickly, as Roger could see by the light of the moon, which had risen higher.

He noticed the short ears pointed forward on the ugly head and the parted lips disclosed the sharp white teeth. There was a convulsive tremor of the lithe body, and then, from the opened mouth came a cry so dismal, so weird and terrifying to the boy that he shivered in fear, and felt his heart go thumping away under his ribs. The next instant the wild-cat launched itself forward with a spring, straight at the boyish figure that stood ready to meet it.

With a quick motion Roger lifted the short, heavy club, and then, as he saw the beast directly in front of him, he gave a half turn, so that the animal would sail past to the left. At the same time he brought the stick down with all his force, aiming at the ugly head. He missed this spot, but struck just behind it, as the brute passed him, and so close was the cat that the claws in its nearest hind leg caught the lower part of the boy's coat and tore it as if a sharp knife had cut it. The brute landed some five feet beyond Roger, letting out a mingled howl of pain and rage.

But the fight had only begun, and Roger knew if the wild thing returned to the attack with the energy it had

displayed at first he could scarcely hope to beat it off again. However, the animal seemed disposed to practise a little caution now and to be a trifle wary about repeating its jump. The boy turned partly around and saw the beast come to a sudden stop. Then it swung about and, making a little circle, ran quickly and leaped lightly upon the fallen log, where it crouched, ready for another spring.

But now Roger seemed to feel the deadly fear leaving him, and he almost rejoiced in the thought of the battle that was to come, even though he knew it was likely to result badly for himself. He had passed through the first scrimmage and, like a soldier who has once been under fire, he almost wished for another skirmish in the struggle.

He watched the animal with sharp eyes and was glad to find the light increasing, as the moon rose more above the trees, though the leaves through which the beams came made uncertain shadows. Then the boy detected some movement on the part of the beast and saw that the cat, instead of crouching for another spring, had crawled out on the log toward the end that was in deepest gloom.

"I wonder what he 's up to now?" said Roger, softly.

He could hear the brute leap on the soft wood-carpet of moss and dried leaves, and then the grayish body seemed to fade away. But Roger knew the animal had not left him. It was trying to sneak up behind him, so as to leap on his back, he felt, and the boy turned to face in that direction. As he did so he heard a noise near the log where the cat had just been crouching, and he turned quickly to catch a glimpse of the long slender form pass-

ing rapidly by in the semi-darkness. For a moment Roger was puzzled, and then it came to him like a flash. The beast was racing about him in a circle!

He did not know what to do, and while he hesitated sorely alarmed, with the fear tugging at his heart again, the cat passed in front of him once more.

Only this time the animal was farther from the log and nearer to the boy. Roger knew that the brute would narrow the circles until it was close enough to spring at him, and, under these circumstances, it was impossible to tell from which point the dangerous leap might come. Surely the boy was in grave danger now, and he felt it keenly. He backed up close against the tree, but this was scarcely any protection, as the trunk was not large enough. Yet he dared not leave it to seek another.

The cat continued to run about him in ever smaller curves. Roger raised his club and waited in an agony of suspense — waited to see the tense body come sailing toward him — waited to feel the sharp claws and cruel teeth.

Up to this moment he had held the club in one hand, but, thinking to use it with greater force, he now took hold with both right and left. As he did so, he noticed that in his left hand he still held his knife. He was about to cast it from him, not wanting to risk putting it in his pocket, when his fingers touched something that seemed to be caught in the slot-like opening of the handle where the blades went. The knife was a two-bladed one, but the smaller bit of steel had been broken off, and, where

this should have fitted Roger was conscious that something had lodged in the handle. He hurriedly felt of it.

It was a match!

How his heart thrilled. Here was a means of safety. Wild animals fear a blaze. With this match which he had found so unexpectedly he could kindle a fire.

Now he had a chance of holding the wild-cat at bay until morning. With his feet he scraped together some dry leaves into a little heap. Then, watching until the animal had once more passed between him and the log, he stooped over.

But, after all, there was only a slim chance in his favor. The match might be a burned one, it might miss fire, or go out before he had an opportunity to kindle the leaves, or the leaves themselves might be too damp to burn. All these thoughts came to him on the instant. But there was no time to lose. He struck the match on the leg of his trousers. It sputtered, fused, and flared brightly. Then it almost died away, and Roger's heart grew like lead. A little wind sprang up and threatened to extinguish the tiny flame. But though it almost left the wood it did not blow off altogether, and once again it burned strongly.

Roger leaned over toward the pile of débris. He held the match to it. Some of the dried foliage hissed and smoked, for it was damp. But a little wisp of dried grass caught. This blazed up with a crackle. The flames communicated to the leaves, which soon began to ignite, though not brightly, and with more smoke than fire. How

anxiously did the boy watch them, for it meant safety, if not life, to him. His heart seemed almost to be suffocating him with its beating. Then the dried stuff caught the flames well and burned with a spurt of fire and sparks.

The next instant there was a rush from behind Roger. He half turned and rose from his stooping position over the blaze. There came whizzing through the air the body of the beast, as if shot from a catapult.

Its forepaws struck the boy on the shoulders, and he could feel, for a half second, the prick of the sharp claws through his coat. The force of the leap threw him forward, and though he tried to save himself, though he bravely endeavored to strike the beast with his club, he felt himself sinking beneath the weight of the cat. He hit the ground with considerable force, close to the fire, so near, indeed, that the flames, which had increased, felt hot on his face.

Then there was a howl and a yelp of pain and surprise from the brute, followed by a roar. Roger felt the cruel claws sinking deeper into his flesh. He screamed in agony, and then to his great wonderment he noted a sudden ceasing of the weight that was pressing him down. The claws no longer stuck into him, and the cat leaped from his back. Like a flash the boy rolled over, to get away from the fire which had spread and was scorching him.

Then he ventured to rise to his knees. He saw the wildcat sneaking off in the darkness. The burning leaves had served their purpose and frightened the animal away.

While the boy stood there, his heart palpitating with

fright, he suddenly saw a bright streak, like a sliver of flame, shoot through the trees in front of him. Accompanying it there was the sharp report of a rifle, followed by a wild howl of agony. By the combined light of the fire and the moon Roger saw the cat leap high in the air.

There was a crackle of broken tree limbs, as the beast fell back. Then something else stirred in the woods, and into the circle of the blaze stalked a tall dark man whose face exhibited the features of an Indian, and who, after a glance at the boy, uttered one word:

"Sagoola!"

CHAPTER IX

OUT OF THE WOODS

For nearly a minute Roger stood and stared at the Indian, who, despite his modern clothes was yet sufficiently a redman to make the boy wonder how in the world he ever came there. On his side the newcomer glanced at Roger by the light of the flickering fire, and a smile came on his bronzed face.

"Sagoola! Sagoola!" he repeated. "How do!"

"Oh!" said Roger, faintly comprehending that his companion had only greeted him in the Indian tongue. "Oh, how do you do yourself?"

"Fine — good," answered the Indian.

"I 'm glad you came along just when you did," went on Roger. "The wild-cat had me down, and I thought I was a goner."

"Hu!" grunted the redman. "Smart boy. Light fire. Wild-cat heap 'fraid fire. Ole Johnny Green shoot 'um."

"Johnny Green?" repeated Roger in an inquiring tone.

"Yep. Me ole Johnny Green. My boy, he young Johnny Green."

"Why, I thought Indians had different names from that," said the boy. "Names like Yellow Tail, Eagle Eye, and Big Thunder."

"Hu! Good names wild Injun. Me tame Injun. Have tame name. Live to Reservation at Castle. Where yo' from?"

"My name is Roger Anderson," and he spoke slowly, so his new friend would have no trouble in understanding, "I am staying with my uncle, Bert Kimball, at Cardiff, and got lost in the woods. I was riding with my cousin, and the horse ran away."

"Bert Kimball yo' say yo' uncle?"

"Yes."

"Over by Cardiff?"

"Yes, do you know him?"

"Sure, sartin. Bert an' me good frens. Yo' loss?"

"Well, I guess that 's what you 'd call it; I 'm lost," admitted Roger, whose spirits had improved very much in the last few minutes. He was no longer in fear of the wild-cat, and, as for the Indian, he thought, rightly, that he need be in no worry as to his intentions, though it was the first time he knew how near he was to an Indian encampment.

He briefly explained how he had come to be in the woods, and then he waited to see what Johnny Green would propose. The Indian stood his rifle up against a tree, stalked off into the darkness, and returned presently, lugging the body of the wild-cat, which he threw on the ground near the smouldering fire. Seeing that the blaze was dying out for

lack of fuel, Roger cast on some twigs and branches, until the flames leaped up brightly. Johnny Green squatted down on a log, and Roger followed his example. For a moment there was silence between them. Then the Indian spoke.

"Not much good for eat," he said, indicating the carcass of the dead animal he had shot. "Radder have coon. Fur of 'um good; that all."

"Were you out hunting coons?" asked Roger, and Johnny Green nodded that he was.

"Will you show me the way back home, when you are through hunting?" asked the boy, after a pause.

The Indian nodded his head once more, to indicate that he would act as guide. He looked to the loading of his rifle, and then proceeded to tie the legs of his prize. He slung the body about his neck, picked up his gun, and looking at Roger, said: "Come 'long. We go to Bert Kimball. I show yo'."

He paused to trample out the embers of the fire, that it might not spread in the dry woods, and then he started off through the forest, seeming to strike the path without even looking for it. Roger hesitated a moment, then followed.

The boy kept close behind his guide, who walked at rather a swift pace, as though he was on a country road, instead of being in the depths of the wood, with only a pale moon, now half obscured by clouds to light him. The boy could not help admiring the unhesitating manner in which the Indian picked his way through the maze of trees.

It was what might be expected of a wild Indian, Roger thought; of one who had lived all his life in the open. But here was apparently a civilized redman, who had not a chance to exercise his woodcraft in years, perhaps. Yet he made no false steps and moved as swiftly through the dark woods as Roger could have done on a brilliantly lighted street. It must be a sort of animal instinct the boy concluded.

For a few minutes after he started Roger could not help feeling a bit distrustful. How could he be sure that the Indian was what he said he was? How could he know that Johnny Green would guide him safely to his uncle's house? Once he was almost on the point of turning back, but the thought of the dark forest into which he would have to plunge, without knowing where the path was, and the fear that there were hiding behind the trees more and uglier wild animals than he had yet encountered, deterred him.

Besides, Johnny Green did not seem to care much whether the boy followed him or not. He had promised to guide him out of the wood, and if Roger did n't want to be taken home, what concern was it of Johnny Green's? Reasoning thus, the boy concluded it must be all right, and then he began to follow with swift steps, keeping up as well as he was able, with his silent leader.

In what seemed to Roger to be a very short time, he and Johnny Green emerged from the deeper forest into a sort of clearing, where a number of trees had been cut down. Traversing this was a rough wagon road, used, it seemed,

by the wood choppers. Johnny Green struck into this with a grunt of satisfaction at the easier going, and he increased his pace so that Roger, exhausted and wearied as he was, found it difficult to keep his guide in sight. Perhaps the Indian heard the boy breathing rather heavy because of the exertions, or he might have recalled that his legs were longer and tougher than his companion's. At any rate, Johnny Green slackened his pace, and Roger was glad of it. Half a mile of travel along the wood trail brought the two out into the main road, and Roger, feeling the hard-packed dirt under his feet, saw that he was on the same highway where he and Adrian had driven with the grapes. It seemed almost a week ago, though it was but a few hours. There was considerable light now, even though the clouds did darken the moon at times, and Roger could distinguish dimly the fields, fenced in and extending to right and left away from the road.

"Tree mile now," grunted Johnny Green. It was the first time he had spoken since they started.

"To where?" asked Roger.

"Tree mile Bert Kimball," and the boy was glad to learn how near home he was. It was slightly down hill going now, and the walking was good, so both stepped out at a lively pace. The night was chilly, and the damp wind made Roger shiver, so he was glad of the vigorous exercise that kept his blood in circulation. It was lonesome too, even though Johnny Green was just ahead of him, and the boy listened, with a sort of dread, to the mournful hooting of the owls, the cheeping of the tree-toads and the chirping

of the crickets. For some time the two kept on in silence. Then the Indian suddenly halted in the middle of the road. He bent his head as if to catch some sound in the distance.

"Hark!" he cautioned, and held up his hand warningly.

Roger stopped. Yes, there was some noise quite a way in front, but at first its character could not be distinguished. Then in a few moments it resolved into a sort of confused shouting.

"What yo' name?" asked Johnny Green, turning quickly to the boy at his side.

"Roger."

"They callin' yo'," he announced. "Bert Kimball I tink."

"Is it?" joyfully.

"Yep. Listen."

Faintly Roger heard a voice shouting. He could make out no words, however. It increased his respect for Johnny Green's attainments that the Indian could understand a name called from such a distance.

Then Roger's companion raised his voice in a long, loud, shrill, far-carrying halloo: "Hi! Bert Kimball! Here yo' boy Roger!"

There came an answering shout, in which the boy could scarcely distinguish his own name, and he, too, cried out: "Here I am, Uncle Bert! I 'm all right!"

A few minutes later there flashed from behind a bend in the road the gleam of a lantern, and soon another flickering light appeared. Roger ran toward them, and Johnny Green hurried on also. Nearer and nearer came the lights,

and then in a few minutes the seekers and the lost were together.

While Adrian, who was with his father, was shaking hands with Roger and telling him how glad he was to see him again, Mr. Kimball was exchanging greetings with the Indian and looking at the wild-cat slung across his shoulders. It did n't take long for Roger to tell his experience, and the words of praise that came from his uncle and cousin, at his wise and brave conduct in the fight with the beast, more than repaid him for the fright and discomfort he had undergone. The cuts and scratches on his back proved to be only slight ones, when Mr. Kimball insisted on looking at them by the light of the lanterns.

"Ye got off mighty lucky," commented the farmer, as Roger put on his coat again.

"What happened?" asked Roger of Adrian. "Did something scare the horse?"

"The wagon struck a stone," explained Adrian, "and you were pitched out. I suppose you must have lost your senses by hitting your head on the hard ground. I tried to grab you when I saw you going, and I must have frightened the horse, for he bolted as if a bear was after him. I guess it was the first time he ever ran away and he rather liked it, for he never stopped galloping until I got to Enberry Took's house, though I sawed on the lines for all I was worth. When I found I was so near home I thought I 'd better go on, put the rig up, and get dad to come back with me to find you, for I thought we 'd meet you walking in. We figured on seeing you within the first mile, but

you must have turned around and gone back toward Tully. We went slow, for it was dark at first, and we did n't want to miss you. It was lucky you happened to find that one match in your knife, was n't it?"

"It was luckier that Johnny Green came along just when he did," said Roger, "or the fire might not have done me much good."

"Wa'al, I reckon it 's lucky all around," interposed Mr. Kimball. "Now, ef it 's all th' same t' ye two boys, we 'll git 'long hum, 'n' relieve th' women folks, fer they most hed a caniption fit when they heard what happened."

So the four started on toward Cardiff, the two boys walking behind Mr. Kimball and Johnny Green.

"Say," began Roger in a low tone, "is he a real Indian?"

"Sure," replied Adrian. "He 's one of the Onondaga tribe. There 's a reservation of them at a place they call the Castle, which is what they name their Council House. It 's about three miles from Cardiff. I meant to tell you about them, but I forgot it. They 're full-blooded Indians, but they 're not wild, though some of the older ones were once, I suppose. We 'll take a trip down and see 'em soon, and get 'em to make us some bows and arrows. Most of 'em know dad, from buying honey from him."

Without further incident the little party reached Cardiff. While Roger, with his uncle and cousin turned in at the welcome farmhouse, Johnny Green, with a grunted good night, kept on to his cabin. Roger found his aunt and pretty cousin waiting for him in great anxiety, and very glad indeed were they to see him again, and to

learn that he had come to no great harm, though he had been in grave danger. Mrs. Kimball insisted on putting some home-made salve on the cuts and scratches in Roger's back, which were now beginning to smart a little, though they were not deep.

"That stuff 'll draw the soreness out," said Mrs. Kimball.

"It feels good, at any rate," said Roger.

"Now I reckon you 'll like some supper," went on his aunt, bustling about.

"Supper? Breakfust 'd be nearer th' mark," spoke up Mr. Kimball, looking at his big silver watch, which showed two o'clock.

"Anything, as long as it 's something to eat," said Roger. "I 'm as hungry as a bear."

"Or a wild-cat," laughed Clara, as she set the coffee on to boil.

A few minutes later they all drew up to the table with good appetites, for when the others heard what happened to Roger they had been in no mood for supper earlier in the evening.

The whole story had to be gone over again by Roger, and when he had finished Mr. Kimball packed them all off to bed.

CHAPTER X

BAD NEWS

Roger slept late that morning, and his aunt would not let Adrian awaken him, much as the country boy desired to hear more of his cousin's adventures. It was almost ten o'clock when Roger came downstairs, rubbing his eyes. He found no one about the house but Clara, who greeted him with a smile and an invitation to sit down to a fresh hot breakfast she had prepared.

"Well, I must say I 'm getting into lazy ways," was the boy's remark. "I 'm used to getting up earlier than this when I 'm home. Where 's everybody except you?"

"Oh, father 's picking some apples, Ade 's gone up in the vineyard, mother 's gone over to Mrs. Took's to borrow some molasses, the hired man 's picking cucumbers, and I —"

"You have to stay home to bother getting me some breakfast," finished Roger. "I 'm sorry to put you to so much trouble."

"It is n't any trouble at all," protested Clara, earnestly. "Mother said you must have a good sleep to make up for

what you lost last night. My! But you must have been frightened. How 's your back? We 're all so glad you are safe that you can sleep until noon if you want to. Did you dream of wild-cats and Indians?"

"Answering your last question first, I will say I did n't dream at all," said Roger, smiling. "As for my back, I 'd hardly know I was scratched. That 's fine salve. I 've had plenty of sleep, thank you, and I feel very well. Quite ready for breakfast, too, for I 'm hungry," he added, as he sat down in front of the nicely browned cakes, the hot coffee, and the meat. He ate heartily, and just as he finished his aunt came in from the neighbor's. She was glad to see he had suffered no ill effects from his exposure in the woods, and his encounter with the wild-cat. While he was talking to Mrs. Kimball and Clara, Adrian came to the house.

"Sagoola!" said the country boy, smiling at his cousin.

"Sagoola!" replied Roger. "Say, Ade, what does that mean? Johnny Green called it to me when he met me in the woods. I had to guess at it."

"That 's Onondaga Indian for 'How do you do?' or 'Hello!' just as it happens."

"Oh," said Roger, comprehending. "Well, I sagoola pretty well. How are you?"

"Same."

"Say," broke in Mr. Kimball, who had come in unperceived, "I want t' say you boys was purty smart t' pitch in 'n' sell them grapes th' way ye did arter ye found Andrews did n't want 'em. Mighty smart 'n' good I call

it. Too bad ye hed t' hev a accident jest when ye was gittin' back, but then it come out all right. Each a' ye is entitled t' a dollar fer th' day's work."

"We did n't do it for money," spoke up Roger, "and besides, I only helped a little bit."

"I know all 'bout thet," said Mr. Kimball, "but ye got a leetle better price 'n Andrews would 'a' paid, 'n' I 'm used t' givin' commissions on sales, so it 's a matter a' business 'ith me."

He pulled out a canvas bag from deep in his trousers pocket, extracted from it two big shining silver dollars, and gave one to each of the boys.

"Thar 's yer pay," he said. "Mind, I ain't givin' it t' ye. Ye airned it fair 'n' square, 'n' ye kin do jest 's ye like 'ith it."

The money was more than either of the boys were in the habit of receiving except, perhaps, around Christmas, and they hardly knew what to do with the coin. Roger held his in an undecided manner.

"I 'll tell you what we 'll do," said Adrian. "This will do to buy some ammunition with, and we can go squirrel hunting. I was just wishing for some cash to get the cartridges, and now we have it. Did you ever go after squirrels, Roger?"

"I never had a chance."

"Well, we 'll go some day next week. I 've got a gun, and I can borrow Porter Amidown's for you. It 'll be lots of sport, and besides, we can get a mess of squirrels for dinner, and that 'll save buying meat."

"I 'll wait 'til I see yer squirrels 'fore I let th' butcher go by," remarked Mrs. Kimball, dryly.

"Wa'al, I 've got t' git back t' th' orchard," said Mr. Kimball, after a pause, and he left to resume his work.

"Want to come up in the vineyard and watch me pick grapes?" asked Adrian of his cousin.

"I 'll come up if you 'll let me help a little," agreed the city boy. "I don't want to simply look on."

"Now ye must be careful, Roger," cautioned Mrs. Kimball. "Land, a body 'd never think ye 'd spent all night in th' woods, keepin' company 'ith a wild-cat thet most took yer skin off. Don't ye go t' pickin' grapes 'n' openin' th' sores agin. Ef ye go Ade 'll hev t' make ye keep still."

"All right, mother," agreed Roger's cousin, and the two boys started off.

The place where the grapes grew was on the side of a gently sloping hill, about a quarter of a mile back of the house. The vines were twined over wires strung between posts, and were planted in rows about ten feet apart, so there was plenty of chance for the sun to get at the fruit, Old Sol's rays being needed to ripen the big purple, red, and white clusters. The boys walked up a little path back of the farmhouse, through the barnyard, up past the corn-crib, and the melon patch, past the yard where a flock of white Wyandotte chickens were cackling, and so on, up to where the air was fragrant with the bloom of the grapes.

"I 'm picking Wordens," said Adrian, referring to the variety of the fruit he was gathering.

"How many kinds have you?" asked Roger.

"Well, we 've got Concords, Isabellas, Niagaras, Delawares, Wordens, and Catawbas."

"I thought all grapes were alike."

"They 're as different as people," said Adrian. "Some folks won't eat anything but Concords. Others want Wordens, and I like them best myself, but dad, he won't eat any but the white Niagaras."

Adrian reached over, cut off a big bunch of purple beauties, and ate them, while Roger did likewise, and it seemed that he had never before tasted such sweet grapes. The ones he occasionally had in New York were not nearly as fresh and good as these, right off the vines.

"Well," announced Adrian finally, throwing down the cleaned-off stem, "I must get to work. I 've only got to fill forty more baskets, and then I can have the rest of the day to myself."

In between the rows of vines he had scattered small unfilled grape baskets. These were to be packed with the ripe bunches and loaded on a wheelbarrow, to be taken to the barn, and then the next day they would be sent to Syracuse. Adrian began to work, and Roger insisted that at least he be allowed to scatter the empty receptacles where they would be handy for his cousin. He also took the filled ones out to the end of the rows as Adrian finished with each.

Snip-snap went the scissors Adrian used to cut off

the finest bunches. Before laying them in the baskets he removed any spoiled or imperfect fruit, so that the clusters would present a uniformly fine appearance, and bring a better price than if sent to market carelessly. Adrian worked rapidly, now that he did not have to stop to distribute the empty baskets or carry the full ones to the end of the row, and in much shorter time than Roger expected the forty were filled. As he placed the last one on the wheelbarrow Adrian remarked:

"Well, that 's done. Want to go to Cardiff now?" for that was the way every one spoke of going up to the centre of the village.

"Would we have time to go to the Indian Reservation?" asked Roger, eagerly, for he had been thinking with anticipation all the morning of the news he had heard concerning the near location of the redmen.

"Well, hardly before dinner," replied Adrian. "It 's three miles there. But we can go this afternoon."

"Then let 's go."

"All right. We 'll take a rest until the dinner horn blows."

So the boys went down to the barn with the last of the grapes. As they approached they were greeted by the barking of a dog, and a brown setter ran out to gambol about Adrian.

"Whose dog?" asked Roger, looking at the beautiful animal.

"Mine," replied Adrian. "He ran off to the woods Saturday, and he must have just come back. He does it

every once in a while. Gets sort of wild and likes to strike out for himself. But he 's always glad to come back. Hi! Jack, old fellow!" and Adrian, setting the wheelbarrow down, ran along swiftly, to be followed by the joyfully barking dog.

The two had a regular romp on the grass.

"Here, old chap!" called Adrian, suddenly, and Jack stopped short in his running to look at his young master with bright eyes and cocked-up ears. "Come here, sir! I 'll introduce you to my cousin Roger."

Adrian led the dog by one ear up to Roger. The intelligent animal sniffed the boy a bit, and then the tail which had dropped began to wag quickly to and fro.

"He likes you all right," announced Adrian. "Shake hands with him, Jack."

The animal lifted his right paw up to Roger, who took it in his hand.

"He 's a fine bird dog," commented Adrian, the introduction over. "We'll take him along when we go hunting."

Then Jack decided he was hungry, so he raced to the house, barking loudly. The boys took the grapes into the barn, and after they had been stowed away, Adrian lifted from a basket two large fine muskmelons. Next he produced a knife and a small bag of salt, when he and Roger proceeded to eat the fruit.

"This is the way dad and I like our melons," he announced to his cousin, as he cut off a luscious slice. It did n't take long to finish the fruit, and about an hour

later, after they had amused themselves by jumping around in the hay, they were quite ready for dinner, when they heard Mrs. Kimball blow the horn vigorously. They announced at the table their intention of going to the Indian Castle, and after the meal was over and they had rested up a bit they started, Jack the dog barking joyously on ahead of them.

The way to the Reservation, or the Castle, as every one in Cardiff called it, was up the main road to the north, a long level stretch of highway, lying between pleasant farm lands. The three miles seemed rather short to Roger, and after a little more than an hour's tramp, they came to a group of log cabins.

"What are those?" asked the city boy.

"Indian houses."

"Is that where they live? I thought they had tents," and Roger's voice showed his disappointment.

"These are n't wild Indians," said Adrian. "They have to live here all the year. The government gives them this land and they raise crops on it, or rather their squaws do; for the Indians let the women do most of the work, same as they did when Columbus discovered this country, as we read in our history books."

Just then, at the door of one of the cabins, appeared a man who seemed to be a negro, and Roger could see several dark-skinned children peeping out from behind the man.

"What are colored folks doing on the Reservation, Adrian?"

"They 're not colored; that 's an Indian. He 's Pete Smith. You see lots of the Indians are very dark, and they look a little like negroes at a distance."

"Well, he certainly don't look like the Indians you see in pictures," commented Roger.

The boys kept on. The little log cabins became more numerous now, and in the fields about them could be observed many Indian squaws at work, husking corn or gathering pumpkins and tomatoes. Once in a while a male Indian would be seen at work, probably because he had no squaw.

The boys now approached a cabin larger than any of the others near it. Adrian, coming opposite it, pointed to something fastened on the front wall.

"Do you know what that is?" he asked his cousin.

"What? Where?"

"Tacked up on the side of the cabin."

"Oh, that? Why, it looks like a piece of fur."

"Don't you know what it is?"

"No."

"That 's the varmint which tried to eat you up last night."

"Not the wild-cat?"

"The very same. This is where Johnny Green lives. He 's skinned the animal. That 's its hide."

Roger stared with much interest at the fur, stretched out to tan. A few hours before it had been a wild-cat bent on doing him mischief. Just then Johnny Green stalked out of his cabin.

"Sagoola!" he exclaimed, pleasantly, grinning expansively in recognition of Roger and Adrian.

"Sagoola!" replied Adrian. "Glad to see you, Johnny. Get home all right last night?"

"Sartin, sure. Got coon, too."

"You did? Where?"

"Down back Bill Eaton's place. Here um hide," and he held up the pelt of a raccoon he had shot and skinned.

"Have you got any bows and arrows you don't want?" asked Adrian, with the freedom of an old acquaintance.

"Mebby so," grinned Johnny, and he went back into his cabin to return with two small but well-made hickory bows and several arrows, feather tipped, but with blunt ends. He gave the weapons to the boys, who thanked him heartily.

"Stop and get some honey when you 're up our way," said Adrian, giving the invitation as a sort of payment for the gift. Then the boys kept on.

They walked to nearly the centre of the Reservation, where the Castle, as the long white Council House was called, stood. It was the most substantial building in the Indian village, being constructed of boards.

"The braves have their green corn and succotash dance here every year," explained Adrian. "They had one about two months ago. I wish you 'd been here. They give a regular performance like a war dance, only it 's to make the Great Spirit, so they think, give a good corn harvest. The Indians rattle dried corn in bladders and circle about the middle of the room, howling and shouting

as if they were crazy. It 's great, I tell you. Dad took me once."

"I 'd like to have seen it," said Roger. "Maybe I 'll stay until next year; then I can."

From the Castle the boys went to the bridge which spanned a little stream that flowed through the Indian village.

"They say a terrible battle was once fought along this creek," said Adrian, as they cast pebbles into the brook. "The early white settlers in this part of the country and the old Onondaga Indians pitched into each other right on the bank of this stream, and lots were killed on both sides. The story goes that the waters ran red with blood that day, and even to the present time the Indians here have a name for this creek which means 'bloody water.' "

"Well," said Roger, after they had been walking about for some time looking at the different sights, "I guess we 'd better be getting back. Had n't we? It 'll be pretty near dark when we reach Cardiff."

Adrian agreed with him. The sun was already dipping well over toward the western hills, and whistling to Jack, who was romping about with some Indian dogs, Adrian and Roger started homeward. They tried shooting with their bows, sending the arrows far on ahead of them and then picking them up, to give them another flight into the air. They moved on briskly, and just as the sun was sinking out of sight, they arrived at Hank Mack's store. A few minutes later the boys were at their home. They

stopped at the spouting spring for a drink of cool, sparkling water, and then entered the house.

They had no sooner reached the kitchen than they were aware that something had occurred. Mr. Kimball was standing in the middle of the floor, holding a letter in his hand. Mrs. Kimball sat in a chair, and it could be seen that she had been crying. Clara stood near her mother.

"Wh — what 's the matter?" asked Adrian, in great alarm. "Has something happened?"

For a moment no one answered him.

"What is it, dad," he persisted, "bad news?"

"Yep, son, it 's bad news," replied his father, brokenly.

"What is it?"

"Th' money your father invested in railroad sheers is all lost," burst out Mrs. Kimball, "'n' Nate Jackson has wrote t' say he 's goin' t' foreclose th' mortgage."

This was bad news indeed, and Adrian sank limply in a chair, while Roger looked helplessly on.

CHAPTER XI

COPPER AND OLD BONES

Though Roger and Adrian knew little of the business connected with mortgages and railroad shares, they realized nevertheless, that something serious had occurred. Adrian never recalled seeing his father look so helpless and worried but once before, and that had been when his mother was dangerously ill. Mr. Kimball's face was pale, and his blue eyes, usually so bright and snapping, were dull, and seemed to be gazing at something far away.

For a moment after Mrs. Kimball's announcement no one spoke. Then, as a man recovering from some heavy blow, the farmer straightened up, shook himself like a big dog emerging from the water, and said:

"Wa'al, boys, it 's true, jest 's mother here says. It 's bad news, sure 'nuff, 'n' I don't know when I 've bin so knocked out. It 's so suddint, jest like one a' them heavy thunder claps thet comes on ye 'fore ye know there 's a storm brewin'."

"Is it very bad?" asked Adrian, softly. "Is all the money gone? Can't you get any of it back?"

"Seems not, son. Leastwise ef I kin, it won't be soon 'nuff fer me, 'cause th' mortgage is agoin' t' be foreclosed, 'n' t' stave thet off I 've got t' hev ready cash. Ef either

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a' th' calamaties hed happened one at a time, I could a' stood it, but havin' 'em both together kinder flambusts me, thet 's what it does. I 'm reg'lar flambusted, thet 's what I be; flambusted, thet 's it," and he sank down in a chair, muttering this one word over and over.

Then, by degrees, Roger and Adrian gathered enough of the matter to understand it somewhat. When Mr. Kimball purchased his farm, some years ago, he did not have enough money to pay all of the price, and he gave a mortgage for the balance, that being a paper, by the terms of which he agreed, after a certain number of years, to pay the rest of the money due or forfeit the farm.

As time went on he prospered with his crops and paid off some of the mortgage. Then his father died and left him a neat sum of money. But instead of using this to cancel the mortgage, Mr. Kimball was induced by his brother Seth to invest it in the stock of a certain railroad. Seth told him that there the money would earn good interest, and when the time came to pay off the mortgage, Mr. Kimball could sell his railroad stock and with the money settle the debt on his farm, with something left.

This would have been a good plan if matters in the financial world had n't gone wrong just before Mr. Kimball was to draw his money from the investment in the railroad shares. The mortgage was nearly due, and he expected to pay it off. But there came a panic in the stock market, and the shares the honest farmer had put his money in dropped below par, so far, in fact, that it

seemed hopeless ever to expect them to rise again. And then, with all his money gone, to be informed that unless he paid off the balance of the mortgage the farm would be taken from him was blow enough to discourage any one.

"Wa'al," said Mr. Kimball, after a long silence, and with more cheerfulness in his tones than his family had heard since he got the bad news, "wa'al, there 's no use cryin' over spilt milk, 'n' what can't be cured must be endured. Th' money 's gone, thet 's sure. Now I 'll hev t' pitch in 'n' airn some more. I 'm young yit. I guess I kin do it. Never say die, 'n' don't guv up th' ship. Them 's my mottoes," and he blew his nose with a vigor that seemed to be uncalled for.

"It 's turrible," spoke up Mrs. Kimball, "jest 's ye were gittin' ready t' take things a leetle easier, Bert. It 's a shame, thet 's what 't is, 'n' ef I could see some a' them railroad directors I 'd tell 'em so, thet 's what I would."

"Easy, easy," said Mr. Kimball. "It 's tough luck, t' be sure, but from what th' newspapers says, I ain't th' only one. There 's lots went down in the Wall Street crash. Plenty a' others lost their money. Th' thing fer me 'n' you t' do now, is t' consider what 's t' be done. No use settin' down 'n' foldin' our hands. Cryin' never mended matters yit. I must go t' th' city t' see Jackson 'bout th' mortgage. Ef he 'll hold off a bit mebby I kin straighten things out. Ef he won't —"

He did n't finish the sentence, but they all knew what he meant.

"I 'm hungry," announced Mr. Kimball, suddenly. "Why," looking at the clock, "here 't is near seven, 'n' th' chores ain't done yit, 'n' no table set."

"I did n't think any 'bout eatin'," said Mrs. Kimball, "but I 'll git supper right away."

She and Clara started to put the meal on, and in bustling about they forgot for a time the bad news. Roger and Adrian went out to help lock up the barn and various out-houses, to bed down the horses, and see that everything was in good shape for the night.

"It 's too bad, isn't it?" ventured Roger, noting his cousin's unusual silence and guessing the cause.

"Well, as dad says, it might be worse," answered Adrian. "I 'm going to pitch in and help all I can."

"And I will too, as long as I 'm here," said Roger heartily, and by reason of this trouble the two boys felt more like brothers than cousins.

"I don't s'pose there 's much we can do though, Ade."

"I know how I can make considerable loose change," replied the country boy. "If it was n't so near winter I could clear twenty-five dollars easy, and that 'd pay some of the interest."

"How could you make twenty-five dollars?" asked Roger.

"I 'll show you to-morrow. There goes the supper horn," and the two boys hurried into the house.

If Roger expected the bad news to have any immediate effect on life at his uncle's house, he was agreeably disappointed. He looked at the table closely to see if there

had been any change made in the quality or quantity of the food, but the board seemed more bountifully spread than ever. There were meat and potatoes, a big plate of salt-rising bread, a large pat of sweet golden butter, cakes, cookies, preserves, cheese, and some dark brown buckwheat honey, enough for a dozen hungry boys. Then Roger felt his heart a little lighter when he saw there was no need to put the household on short rations. Adrian too, appeared relieved when he saw the well-spread table, and he gazed on it with a feeling of thankfulness that things were not as bad as they might have been.

Under other circumstances there might have been a more cheerful party gathered around the board, but then it is hard to be light-hearted when trouble is in the air and when there are worries to be met. However, Mr. Kimball did his best to shake off the feeling of gloom, and he really succeeded so well that, before the meal was over, he had Roger laughing at his recital of some of the queer doings of the people of Cardiff.

After supper, which was not finished until rather later than usual, Mr. Kimball busied himself with various papers and account books. Roger and Adrian feeling tired from their day's tramp went to bed, where, in spite of the memory of the trouble hanging over the house, they slept soundly. In the morning Mr. Kimball went to Syracuse by the early stage, and as the hired man had to take a load of grapes to the city, the two boys were left with the farm to themselves. There were a few chores to do, which they made short work of, and then Adrian,

taking a large bag from the barn, started off across the fields.

"Where to now?" asked Roger.

"I told you I'd show you how to make a little money, didn't I?" said Adrian. "This is one of the ways. I used to do it when I was a small chap, but lately I haven't had much chance, so now I'm going to start in again."

"What are you going to do?"

"Gather bones."

"Bones?"

"Yes, bones."

Roger thought his cousin was joking, but a look at the face of the country lad convinced the city boy there was a serious purpose back of the words.

"You see it's this way," explained Adrian. "Bones are good to make fertilizer of, and there's a factory over to Tully where they buy 'em. They pay half a cent a pound, and farmers that have lots of bones around send 'em to the factory. But there's plenty of bones lying around loose in the fields, and at the back doors of houses. When I was about ten years old, me and Chot Ramsey used to make a half dollar, easy, gathering up the old bones and selling 'em when the collecting wagon came from Tully. That's what I'm going to do now. But I'm going to do it different. I know a number of women folks that'll save their meat bones for me if I ask 'em, and I'm going to. Besides collecting all I can lying around loose, you see I'll have a sort of private

supply to collect from. But maybe you don't want to come along. It 's not much fun, but it 's not dirty, for the bones are all clean ones."

"Of course I 'll come along and help," said Roger. "Did n't I say I would?"

It was rather a novel idea, this one of Adrian's, so Roger thought. But plenty of country boys know the value of bones, though they may never have taken the trouble to collect and sell them. Roger and Adrian started off over the fields. The country lad seemed to know just where to go, and, before proceeding far, he had come across several big beef bones, clean and white.

They were tossed into the bag which the boys carried between them, slung on a long pole. They visited several back-yards of houses, where Adrian knew the people, and, when he had collected all the bones in sight, he asked the women if they would n't save any more they might have, as he would be around again in a week. Most of them promised, for they liked the boy, who had often done favors for them.

"Just throw 'em in one place always, and I can gather 'em up every week," said Adrian, at house after house.

Good luck seemed to be with the boys, for they found more bones than ever Adrian had hoped for. The bag got so heavy they could hardly carry it, and so were forced to make a trip back to the house, to get rid of the load.

"We must have fifty pounds there," reckoned Adrian, proudly, as he piled the contents of the bag in a heap back of the barn, "and there 's fifty more we can get to-day.

Not bad for a start, eh, Roger? One hundred pounds of fertilizer. That 's fifty cents."

"I call it fine," said Roger. "But of course we can't expect to do as well as this every day."

"No, we 'll have to tramp farther for our next hundred pounds," agreed Adrian, as they started off on their second trip.

They went over the fields and roads. The bag was almost full a second time when Adrian, who had picked up a smooth, round stone to throw, stopped short as it fell in the midst of some corn stubble, with a resounding clang.

"That hit something," he declared, as he set off on a run, much to the surprise of Roger. "Hurrah! I thought so," shouted Adrian a second later, as he stooped over where he had seen the stone fall. He held up to view a battered old wash-boiler.

"What good is that?" asked Roger.

"Good? Why, can't you see it has a copper bottom. Copper brings fifteen cents a pound from the junk man, and there 's three pounds here."

He caught up a heavy sharp rock and soon had cut and hammered the bottom off the boiler, the upper part of which was of tin. The copper he beat up into a compact mass and placed it in the bag with the bones. Then having a pretty good load, the boys started home. On the way Adrian came across a large bottle, which he picked up.

"I wish I knew where there were a lot of these," he remarked.

"Why?" asked Roger.

"'Cause George Bennett gives three cents apiece for large ones like this. We must keep our eyes peeled for 'em as we go along."

And they did, but they found no more that day.

"Let 's see," said Adrian, as they were washing up for dinner. "A hundred pounds of bones is fifty cents, and we 'll reckon forty cents for the copper. With three cents for the bottle, that makes ninety-three cents for the morning. My half is forty-six and a half cents; not bad for a starter, eh?"

"Well, I guess you 're a little wrong in the figuring," said Roger.

"How so?"

"Why, it 's all yours. I won't take half. I 'm only helping you in this. I don't want any share."

"But you 've got to take it."

"Well, I won't. It 's all going into a general fund to help pay that mortgage," said Roger, stoutly. "Probably we 'll not get an awful lot, but every little helps, and your father is going to have all my share."

"Well — well," began Adrian, somewhat affected by his cousin's offer, but what he would have said was never known, for the dinner horn blew just then, and the boys were so hungry they forgot everything else save their appetites.

In the afternoon they picked more grapes, and neither of them suggested stopping to rest or play. The fascination of business was on them, and they seemed to have taken the responsibility of wanting to do all they could.

"Might as well get a lot picked," suggested Adrian, as he and Roger snipped away at the big bunches, "then dad can hurry to the city with them while the price is high;" and they gathered the fruit as long as they could see.

When Mr. Kimball returned home from the city that night he seemed to feel a little easier than when he left. He told his wife, and the boys overheard him, that he had succeeded in getting a delay of the mortgage foreclosure until May first, and that would give him several months to try to get the money together. True, it seemed but a respite, for there was not much chance of his securing the cash, he said, since later news of the failure of the railroad shares only confirmed the first report, that they were gone beyond hope of ever getting anything from them. But for all that, Mr. Kimball was hopeful. There was not much chance of using the money he would get from the present crops, as that would be needed for ordinary household expenses. Nevertheless the farmer found a chance to laugh a little, and he was greatly pleased and touched when he learned what the boys had done.

"We must hurry 'n' git th' rest a' th' grapes picked to-morrow," he said. "Cold spell 's a-comin', 'n' a frost 'll nip 'em so they won't sell. My! But I 'm hungry, though, mother. Hungry 's a b'ar. So we 'll hev supper, 'n' talk arterwards."

The meal progressed more pleasantly than the one of the night before, and when it was over and the dishes and

chores were done, they all took their chairs in the "settin' room," as Mrs. Kimball called it. There Clara played the organ, and the boys sang songs and hymns until it was time to go to bed. Roger was tired with the day's experience, and he was anxious, too, about his uncle. But this did not prevent him from sleeping, and he dropped off, feeling that busy and exciting as his life in the country had been, it had already done him good. But there were more lively times ahead of him.

CHAPTER XII

JACK FROST

Roger had been at his uncle's a week when he received a second letter from home. It told him all the folks were well and were hoping he was improving in health. He answered it as soon as he had read it, for beyond the short note he had sent off telling of his safe arrival, he had not yet written much to his mother. So in this second letter he related all of his experiences since coming to Cardiff, from the wrestling match to the adventure with the wild-cat and his partnership with his cousin in the old bone and copper business.

For the next few days the two boys were busy about the farm and garden, Roger helping Adrian as much as he could in the various tasks the country boy had to look after, or which he undertook of his own accord. When there was nothing else to do they gathered old bones, until they had quite a heap back of the barn. One day the collector came from the fertilizer factory and paid Adrian two dollars for what there was, and the boys were as much pleased as older persons would have been over a larger sum.

Thus the time passed for several weeks, during which the remainder of the crops were gathered in. The potatoes

were stored in bins in the cellar, and along side of them were the beets, the turnips, the carrots, the cabbages and onions; enough vegetables, Roger thought, to feed a regiment. Barrels of apples were stowed away in dark corners, with the promise of many pies and dishes of sauce. The swing shelves of the cellar groaned and squeaked under the weight of canned fruit, — peaches, pears, quinces, plum-sauce, apple-butter, and grape jelly, — and it was quite a treat for the boys to go down and gaze at the rows of glass jars which held the sweets in reserve.

The barn was well filled with hay, the oat-bin bulged with fodder, and the silo, where the cornstalks were kept as feed for the cows, seemed like to split apart with its rich contents. The corn-crib, through the openings on the sides, showed a wealth of golden grains, which indicated not only johnny-cake for the house, but plenty of eating for the chickens. In short, there was every indication that whatever else happened there would be no lack of meals in the Kimball home that winter.

While grim care was not altogether absent from Mr. Kimball, owing to the fear that his money matters were hopelessly involved, he seemed to have lost some of his outward signs of worry. He became more cheerful, and as the days went by and the others tried to imitate his example, the household was a more happy place. At any rate, nothing was likely to happen until spring, and by that time something might turn up. At least that is what they all hoped.

The weather was getting colder now, the mornings being rather raw and chill, though there was an invigorating feeling in the air which was noticeably absent from the atmosphere of the city. The nights, too, had grown frosty, though so far only a thin white coating on the ground had greeted the boys as they crawled, shivering, out of bed. But winter was at hand and its coming was anticipated by the animals who, in the woods and fields, were busy laying up their food supplies.

One evening, when Roger and Adrian were returning from Hank Mack's store, they noticed the clear brightness of the stars overhead.

"Whew!" whistled Adrian, as he turned his coat collar up, "there's going to be a black frost to-night," and he ran on a few steps, with hops and jumps, to warm up his blood.

"What's a black frost?" asked Roger.

"I don't know, only that's what they call it when it freezes real hard and there ain't any white frost on the ground. A white frost is a white frost, and a black frost is a black frost, that's all I know."

"And you think there'll be a black frost to-night?"

"I bet there will. Then we can go chestnutting to-morrow. The burs will be down by the wagonload, and I know where we can get bushels of nuts."

"Bushels of chestnuts?" questioned Roger, who had only seen as many of the shiny brown fellows at one time as could be heaped on some street vendor's stand.

"Yes, sir, bushels," maintained Adrian, "and, do you

know, they 'll sell for about five dollars a bushel this year."

"I should think they might, judging by the few you get from the Italians for a dime," said Roger, thinking of how often he had bought the roasted or boiled nuts from the stand at the corner near his home.

The boys now set off, racing towards the house. They spent the evening reading and talking. About nine o'clock, when Adrian stepped to the spout at the side door to get a fresh drink of water, he came back with red cheeks and announced that it was growing much colder.

That night Jack Frost descended on Cardiff valley with all his forces. It got colder and colder, a tingling, vigorous cold that snapped the nails in the clapboards on the house. The morning dawned clear, and a breath of the fresh bracing air made the blood race through the veins.

"This is suthin' like weather," observed Mr. Kimball, rubbing his hands briskly, as he went out to the barn before breakfast to feed and water the cows and horses. "I 'm glad it did n't catch us nappin', 'ith th' grapes not picked."

He broke a thin sheet of ice on the horse trough.

"Thar 'll be skatin' ef this keeps on," he added with a twinkle in his blue eyes, as he saw Roger and Adrian racing out after him. They leaped and bounded, for the bracing air made them feel like young colts running in a big field. Roger seemed to have improved very much in his health in a short time, and he was now a good second to his cousin, a most sturdy youth.

"Reckon it 's goin' t' snow," said Mr. Kimball, as he carried a pail of water into the barn.

"To-day, dad?" asked Adrian, anxiously.

"Not afore night, I guess," said the farmer, "but I kin smell snow," and he sniffed hard.

"Well, I 'm glad you can't smell it until night," laughed Adrian. "Roger 'n' I are going after chestnuts to-day."

"Wa'al, I haint no objections," remarked Mr. Kimball, holding the pail of water where Ned, the horse, could reach it. "Guess a trip chestnuttin' 'll be good fer both on ye. I 'm goin' t' kill hogs t'-morrow, snow er no snow."

"That 'll be lots of fun," said Adrian to Roger. "Come on, let 's eat, 'n' then we 'll go."

The boys made a hurried breakfast and then, warmly clad, they started for the woods, carrying bags in which to gather the nuts. They had about two miles to walk, and when they reached the chestnut grove, Adrian saw he had not been wrong in his surmise that there would be a heavy fall. They found the ground covered with the burs, which had burst open, showing the shining brown nuts inside.

"Hurrah!" shouted Adrian. "Get to work! Here they are! Don't let the squirrels and chipmunks beat us."

Indeed, it was high time the boys started in, for there were scores of red and gray squirrels and the prettily striped chipmunks scampering about on the ground and in the trees, filling their pouch-like cheeks with the nuts, and then leaping and bounding away to their nests with

the store of winter provender. The boys began to hustle, threshing the burs from the nuts, and then scooping the latter into the bags they had brought. It was n't long before they had gathered several pecks, and they did n't have to cover much ground to get them either.

Adrian packed nearly a bushel into his sack before he was satisfied, but Roger was content to lug home a little more than two pecks, as he was hardly strong enough to bear the weight of more. They tramped slowly back, stopping frequently to rest. Emptying the nuts into baskets they went again to the woods for more, for as Adrian said, the squirrels would soon make short work of the harvest unless the boys were lively. On their second trip the hired man went with them, trundling a wheelbarrow, and this time they brought away over three bushels, leaving as many more piled in a heap, the hired man going after them alone later.

"Got about seven bushels," announced Adrian, proudly, at the supper table. "Not bad, eh, pop?"

"I should say not," replied Mr. Kimball. "'N' Porter Amidown were tellin' me yist'day they 'd gone t' six dollars a bushel."

"Then we 'll send out six bushels in the morning, when Porter goes to the city," said Adrian. "One bushel 'll be more than we can eat. That 'll be thirty-six dollars toward the mortgage, dad."

"Bless yer heart," exclaimed Mr. Kimball, pretending that he suddenly had a very bad cold. "Bless yer hearts, boys, I — I — don't want yer money."

"But you 've got to take it," decided Adrian and Roger in one breath, immensely pleased with their day's work, which had only been a pleasure, and feeling proud that it would amount to so much in money.

There was a light flurry of snow that night, and when the boys awoke next morning they found the ground hidden under a white, fleecy blanket. They were not up early enough to see their chestnuts put on the stage to be sent to Syracuse, but Mrs. Kimball told them at the breakfast table that they went all right.

"Where 's dad?" asked Adrian.

"Gittin' ready t' kill pigs," answered Mrs. Kimball.

"Hurrah! Roger! That 'll be sport! Hurry up. Who 's going to help him, mother?"

"I guess old man Hounson 's comin' over. I heard yer father say suthin' 'bout him."

"Well, I reckon we can lend a hand at starting the fire, or something," said Adrian.

The boys went out to the barnyard as soon as possible, where they found Mr. Kimball getting ready to start a fire under a big caldron of water that was to be used at a later stage in the proceedings.

"Let us make the fire, dad," begged Adrian, and getting permission, he and Roger soon had a fine blaze going.

The snow was soon trampled down and melting near the fire of hickory logs, which crackled, sputtered, and sparked, filling the cold, bracing air with a pleasant nutty smell. The boys as well as Mr. Kimball and his hired

man had heavy boots on, and they wore their oldest clothing, since preparing pigs for sausage and pork chops is not exactly clean work.

"Wa'al, I see yer gettin' ready fer me," spoke a high-pitched voice suddenly, and a tall, spare man, with a much wrinkled face and a little bunch of gray beard on his chin, walked up the driveway to where Mr. Kimball and the boys were gathered about the heat. He too wore boots and an old overcoat. His arms were long and his hands bony and knotted.

"Yep, we 're prepared fer ye, Hounson," said Mr. Kimball. "I see ye 've got yer instruments a' death 'n' destruction 'ith ye," noting some hooks and a number of long, shining, sharp knives which the old man laid on the rough plank bench near the boiling water.

"Good nippin' weather fer th' middle a' November," observed Hounson, warming his hands at the crackling blaze and nodding to the boys.

"'T is thet," replied Mr. Kimball, while he tried the temperature of the water with his finger. "Hot 'nuff," he said, as he drew his hand hurriedly away from the boiling fluid. "Might 's well start in," and he motioned to the hired man. Hounson took up a long sharp knife, and the three men started for the pig-sty, which contained half a dozen squealing porkers, all unconscious of the fate in store for them.

Then came a busy period. While Mr. Kimball and his hired man held the hog down on its back, old man Hounson skilfully and quickly killed it by cutting its throat. Cruel

as it seemed to Roger, the animals really suffered very little pain, so rapidly was the knife thrust into a vital part. Then the carcass was dragged over to the incline, made of planks, which led down into a barrel of hot water filled from the steaming caldron, and soused up and down in this until the bristles were softened, so they could easily be removed by the three-sided iron scraper. Next the pig was cleaned and made ready for the market, or for storing away for winter. The boys got the bladders, which they carefully preserved, as Adrian said he could sell them to the Indians at the Reservation, who put dried corn in them and rattled them at their dances.

It was hard work for the three men, this business of pig killing and cutting up and preparing the meat for winter use, and it took the most of the day. The next two were spent in separating the various portions of the hogs, while preparations were made for smoking the hams, with a fire started in the smoke-house, the smouldering blaze being fed with hickory chips, sawdust, and corncobs.

Next Mrs. Kimball, Clara, and Mrs. Hounson, who had been called in to help, got ready to make sausage into links. This work was kept up late one night, when several neighbors dropped in to give assistance. Roger and Adrian took spells at turning the crank of the machine which ground the meat up, and then they worked the lever which forced the plunger down and shoved the sausage into the links. Mrs. Kimball stood near as the long slender skin was filled. About every four inches she gave the skin a twist, which separated the sausage into the familiar lengths.

Clara held a big needle, and whenever an air bubble appeared on the surface of the skin, she skilfully pricked it, that the sausage might last better, the admission of air to the meat hindering it from keeping well. It was a new and interesting experience to the city boy, and he enjoyed it very much.

When the work was finished there was a lunch of doughnuts, cheese, cookies, apples, cider, and nuts, and the boys listened while the womenfolks talked of the doings in Cardiff.

Thus was the long, cold, severe winter provided against in the Kimball homestead, which now held a bountiful supply of the various meats that pigs are noted for, — sausage, hams, bacon, salt pork, and spare-ribs. Never was there such sweet cured hams, never such clean, cunning, appetizing links of sausage, never such evenly streaked bacon, and never such lean pork chops, with just enough fat on. There might come great blizzards, but in the big farmhouse none would be hungry.

The days passed swiftly now, and the weather grew more severe. Preparations for enduring the winter went on in all the Cardiff homes, and Roger began to anticipate the delights of this season in the country, where the snow comes down to stay for months at a time.

It was the end of November, and a cold, blustery night, with banks of big gray clouds blowing up from the west.

"Thar 's snow in 'em," prophesied Mr. Kimball.

And so it proved, for the next morning when the boys peered from the frost-encrusted window, they saw the air

full of swirling, feathery flakes which covered the ground to a depth of two feet.

"This is fine!" shouted Adrian. "This means coasting on Lafayette hill."

The boys hurried into their clothes, for there was no fire in their bedrooms, and the only heat upstairs came from the stove-pipe, which passed up through the chambers. From the kitchen came the smell of hickory wood burning in the range. It mingled with the odor of buckwheat cakes, fried sausage, and hot coffee.

"My! But that smells good!" cried Roger.

"You bet!" agreed Adrian, earnestly. "I can eat a dozen cakes this morning, with the maple syrup and the sausage gravy mother makes."

CHAPTER XIII

LAFAYETTE HILL

It was, indeed, good coasting down Lafayette hill. This was a long and, at certain places, a steep slope, which led from Cardiff village, over the mountain, to the town of Lafayette. A few miles beyond Lafayette was another settlement called Onativia. The long hill wound in and out, with queer twists and turns and an abundance of thank-'e-ma'ams, which made the sleds leap up in the air as the runners struck those spots.

The snow storm ceased in the afternoon, when Roger and Adrian, donning their boots, mufflers, and short jackets, trudged off to the hill, dragging clipper sleds with them. They found the coasting-place black and swarming with boys and girls, — hearty, sturdy youngsters, who laughed and shouted as they pelted each other with snowballs. The white flakes had not become packed down hard enough yet to make the going good, but beneath the hundreds of tramping feet and the scores of sled runners, that process would not take long. The really swift and exciting coasting, however, would not begin until the hill was worn smooth and icy.

Roger and Adrian joined the happy throng of young people. Like the others they dragged their sleds part way

up the hill, and then, leaping skilfully upon the narrow board, they slid down, going faster and faster as they gathered momentum. The hill was two miles in extent, but none of the youngsters cared to go to the top to get the benefit of the long slide. It took too much time to walk up, and they preferred the more rapid, though shorter skimming over the snowy surface.

"It is n't very good yet," said Adrian, as they reached the bottom of the slope, after an invigorating ride. "Wait two or three days, though, until the sun thaws it a bit, and it freezes some more, and then you 'll see coasting that is coasting. You 'll see a race that I bet you never saw one like before."

"What kind of a race?"

"A two-mile coasting race down this hill, for the championship of the valley, among the boys of Cardiff, Lafayette, and Onativia."

"You don't mean to say they race down this hill?"

"Sure. On big bob sleds. I 'm captain of our bob, and you can go 'long this year. We 'll have the race in about a week."

Just then Adrian saw some boy acquaintances.

"Hey, Ed," he called to one of them, "come here. And you, too, Jim."

Two boys joined Adrian, big, sturdy, red-cheeked lads, panting with their exercise in the crisp air. Roger was introduced to the newcomers, Edward Johnson and James Smather.

"I was just telling my cousin about our yearly cham-

pionship race," explained Adrian, "when I happened to see you two. I suppose we 'll have the contest, as usual?"

"Of course," said Ed, and Jim agreed with him.

"Looks as if we could have it by Saturday," said Jim, carefully noting the condition of the hill.

"I guess it 'll be packed hard enough by then," assented Ed. "I s'pose you fellers are ready for another lickin'," he added, grinning a bit at Adrian.

"If you can beat this time you 're welcome to," was the reply, and Adrian seemed a little nettled.

"I reckon you won't walk away from the Lafayette boys as easily as you did last winter," said Jim to Ed. "We beat you the year before, and we can do it again, and Cardiff too."

"Don't holler 'til you 're out of the woods," advised Adrian. "I 've put new runners on our bob."

"You 'll need 'em, from the way she hung back last winter," laughed Edward, who had been captain of the victorious Onativia team the previous year.

The three-cornered race had been won by Lafayette two years in succession, and, as in the contests over which Adrian had been commander, his crew had lost in the struggle, their hearts were not exactly happy, though neither captain nor crew was discouraged.

"Shall we say Saturday for the race?" asked Adrian at length.

"Suits me," came from James.

"I 'm agreeable," assented Edward, and thus the three captains arranged.

This was Tuesday when the date for the contest was set. After making up the details with his opponents, Adrian proposed a few more coasts down the hill, and then he and Roger trudged off home.

"Do you think you'll win?" asked Roger anxiously as he plodded along the scarcely broken road. He was almost as interested as Adrian, for, though he had so recently come to Cardiff, he already felt himself one of the boys there.

"It's hard telling," answered Adrian, after a pause. "The Onativia boys have a very swift bob, and they usually manage to get off a little quicker than we do. We'd have won last year, if they hadn't got to the narrow part of the road before we did."

"What happened?" asked Roger.

"Why, we couldn't pass 'em, as there was only room for one sled there. So they came in first. But I've got a plan for this race, though, that ought to bring us in ahead, if I can only work it out. You just wait, that's all."

Roger thought Saturday would never come. There was little to do about the farm now, so he and Adrian overhauled the big Cardiff bob, which was stored in Mr. Kimball's barn. In this work they were assisted by such of the crew as could spare time from their duties.

The runners of the sled were filed, and polished bright and smooth. Several extra braces were put in to stiffen the long board. The carpet, on top of this, was stuffed again, so as to afford a softer seat going over the bumps,

and the foot-rests were altered a bit. Adrian also put on a louder sounding gong.

Then he made a change which most of the boys declared was a foolish one. This was to make the rear as well as the front small sled movable, so that either and both could be steered separately. The front bob was turned from side to side, by means of an iron wheel on an upright rod, just as the regular coasting bob is. But it was rather an innovation to have the rear sled steerable also. This was Adrian's idea, worked out from something he had seen on a recent visit to Syracuse. This was the sight of a long fire ladder truck turning short and sharp around corners because of both front and rear trucks being movable. He reasoned if a long wagon could be handled to advantage this way a long bob-sled might also.

There was a particular reason why Adrian wanted to steer quickly and turn short, as developed later. At first some of the boys who formed the crew of the bob were inclined to protest at the use of the second steering-wheel. But Adrian silenced them.

"Look here," he said, "I 'm captain of this shebang and as long as I am I 'm going to steer it the way I think best. If anybody don't like it, they need n't ride. I can get plenty to take those fellows' places. And if you don't want me for captain, just sing out," and Adrian paused for an answer.

"Of course we want you for captain," cried several.

"All right, then, just let me manage it. I 'm going to

have two steering-wheels, and we 're going to win the race this time."

"I hope so," commented Thomas Archer, and the others joined him in the wish.

Finally the day of the triple contest came. On Friday the snow melted and thawed on Lafayette hill; but that night it grew colder and froze, until the surface of the slope was one long stretch of ice and snow, making a perfect covering for coasting. Saturday dawned clear and cold, but with no biting wind — a rare day for the sport.

All Cardiff seemed to be astir early that morning, though the contest would not begin until two o'clock. An hour before that time, however, crowds began to gather along the hill, a number of the men and boys tramping up the steep slope to the top, that they might witness the start.

The majority of the spectators, however, preferred to remain where they could see the finish, and that was near Hank Mack's store, in the centre of Cardiff, where the road from Lafayette joined with the main thoroughfare leading to Syracuse. This was a vantage point where might be observed the ending of the struggle, which meant so much to the boys, and in a measure to their elders. On the far side of the main road, opposite the end of the hill, was a big bank of snow into which the racers might steer, if, perchance, they found themselves, at the swift completion of the journey, unable to turn to left or right. Thus the chance of accidents was lessened.

The boys of Lafayette and Onativia had one advantage, for they did not have to drag their heavy bob up the hill

for the start, as the Cardiff crew did. But for this race, at least, that labor was saved Adrian and his chums, for Mr. Kimball got out his team of horses, hitched them to the big sled, and the animals, which were sharp-shod, easily dragged the racer up the two-mile incline, for which aid the boys were very thankful.

The Cardiff crew, at the head of which marched Adrian and Roger, followed the team, walking leisurely along and keeping a sharp watch that the bob came to no mishap. All but two of the boys would be merely passengers, for to manage the affair only a pair of steersmen were needed, the others being there simply to give weight and to make the contest more interesting and exciting.

With the Cardiff crew marched a crowd of youngsters from the village. They knew they must miss the thrilling finish of the race if they went to the top of the hill, but they wanted to lend the fellowship of their presence to the tail-enders of the series of contests, much the same as a crowd of "rooters" accompany their favorite nine or eleven. Besides, the Cardiff crew was going into a sort of hostile country and would need some support.

When the delegation marching with Adrian reached the top of the hill they found themselves the centre of a throng of perhaps two hundred people, mostly boys, though there were a goodly number of young men, and even some graybeards who still felt the joys of youth in their blood. The Onativia crew was surrounded by their friends, and the Lafayette contenders by theirs, and though the Cardiff organization was greatly outnumbered, they did not

feel at all disheartened when they saw how confident their captain was.

Scores of spectators and several members of the rival crews crowded about Adrian's bob, and the two steering-wheels at once attracted attention. There were dozens of questions about the second wheel, to all of which Adrian, as well as his followers, returned polite but evasive answers.

"Mebby th' Cardiff boys calalate on slidin' back'ards 's well 's for'ards," commented a Lafayette supporter. "Thet seems t' be their fav'rite mode a' locomotion, jedgin' from th' last two trys."

A hot reply for this taunt was on Adrian's lips, but he checked himself. It would not do to boast of his plan, for it was yet untried, and he could not say what would be the outcome. So he merely motioned for his crew to keep near him, and answered nothing to the laugh that went up at the attempted wit of the Lafayette young man. Adrian took his cousin to one side.

"I have n't said much to you, Roger, about making this trip," he said, "but I want you to go along with me. You 're not afraid, are you?"

"Not a bit," replied Roger, stoutly, though in his heart he was a little apprehensive, as he saw the big white stretch sloping steeply before him and thought of the twists, the turns, and bumps in it. "I 'll go if you 'll let me, but maybe some of the crew won't like it. Besides, it will make thirteen on the sled, and you know —"

"Can't make me believe in bad luck signs of any sort,"

laughed Adrian. "As for the crew not wanting you, I 've spoken to them about it, and they 're all agreeable. There are no regular rules to this race, anyhow. You can take as many as the bob will carry."

So it was arranged Roger was to go. The preparations were nearly completed, the judges of the start had been selected, and those for the finish named. The latter set off on their ride down the incline ahead of the three big sleds, so as to be at the foot of the hill on time.

There was no danger of any teams coming up the incline, as the custom of the race was well known in the valley, and farmers gave Lafayette hill a wide berth on that day. As Roger watched the sleds of the judges for the finish whizz down the slope, he felt less and less inclined to make the racing trip. But he did not like to back out now, so he nerved himself for the ordeal.

The three captains held a short conversation and drew straws to see which should have the choice of position at the start. This fell to Adrian for the first time in the last three years, and he felt it was the beginning of success.

The preliminaries were soon arranged, and the starters, who were to shove the sleds to the edge of the hill and over the brow, were selected. There was the last look at the bobs on the part of the captains to see that these were in good shape and nothing loose or dangling, and a final trying of the steering-wheels to ascertain if they worked easily. The boys who formed the three crews began to fasten up stray ends of scarfs and clothing, buttoning their coats tightly, for it would be a fierce and swift journey.

Adrian wore an anxious air, which he tried to shake off, for though he did not need to depend much on his crew, he wanted them to feel there was a good chance for victory, as he honestly believed there was. He tested the two wheels on his bob, made sure that his assistant helmsman understood his duties, and he was ready. As his aid in guiding the big sled Adrian had selected Thomas Baker, a lad of considerable muscle, quick, and reliable.

"I guess we 're in shape," announced Adrian in a low voice to his crew, as he saw the starters coming toward him.

CHAPTER XIV

A DESPERATE RACE

"WELL, boys, take your places," called the starting-judge to the three crews.

The lads all scrambled to their seats on the rival bobs, to which they had been assigned. Roger found himself placed second from Adrian, and though this gave him a fine view of the road stretching before him, he would gladly have changed his position for one farther back. It looked a little too much like taking a ride on the front end of a comet.

It did not take long for the three cargoes of human freight to be loaded. Adrian braced his feet against the cleats he had nailed on the first bob and grasped the steering-wheel firmly. Tom Baker did the same at his rear end, and, between them, came the eleven sturdy youngsters, all from Cardiff, save Roger, though he considered himself at least a temporary resident of that village now.

On the other two bobs the arrangements were just the same, save that there was only one steersman on each, and twelve boys in all instead of thirteen. The significance of the so-called unlucky number was noted by some of the Lafayette crew.

"Ain't you fellers Jonahs enough without goin' out of your way to look for a hoodoo?" asked Jim Smathers as he glanced at Adrian and laughed.

"This will be the luckiest thirteen you ever saw," rejoined the Cardiff captain, and that was the only prediction of victory he allowed himself.

"I s'pose ye all know th' conditions of th' race well 'nuff by this time," remarked the chief starter, Abe Crownheart. "Ye 'll all git shoved at th' same time, 'n' th' bob that gits t' th' bottom a' th' hill fust wins, no matter how it gits thar, pervided it ain't upside down or downside up."

There were nods of assent from the captains, and those detailed for the purpose pulled the three big sleds to within a short distance of the top of the hill. Adrian, having had the choice, had selected the position farthest to the right. Next to him was Lafayette, and at the extreme left the Onativia bob.

"You starters are t' begin t' shove when ye hear th' pistol crack, 'n' not afore," cautioned Mr. Crownheart. "Anybody that tries t' git a false start so 's t' go ahead 'll be fined half a minute headway. So be careful. Are ye all ready, captains?"

"Yes," answered Adrian, shortly, the light of battle coming into his eyes. He meant to win!

"All ready," announced Jim Smather.

"Shove away!" called Ed Johnson.

There was a moment of silence and hesitation.

"One!" counted Mr. Crownheart, raising the revolver slowly.

"Two!" and he extended his hand, holding the weapon high in the air.

"Three! Crack!"

The word and the report of the blank cartridge came together. There was a straining of backs and legs, a bending forward, and a mighty shove from the starters. They were as eager as colts tugging at the harness, for on the first shove or impetus depended much of the early speed of the bobs.

The steel runners squeaked on the snow, the big sleds moved forward, slowly at first, but then more easily and quickly. Now they had reached the very brow of the hill and poised for an instant.

The next second they started down the slope, with a whizz and plunge, amid a roar of cheers.

It was a perfect beginning, and the sharp points of the runners of the three foremost sleds of the bobs were almost in a line. It was to be a fair race. From one single cheer at the successful start the shouts broke up into cries for the different village crews, each one doing honor to his native town. Anxiously did the crowd watch the sleds shooting down the hill. In a few minutes those who had sleighs would coast down also, to find out how the race ended.

The rival bobs were skimming along like birds. At first Roger could distinguish nothing, for a mist came into his eyes, caused by the rushing wind that surged past him. Then he began to see more clearly. He glanced across to the left and was surprised to see no sign of the other sleds. Could they have passed the Cardiff boys?

His heart gave a mighty thump at this fear. Then he was reassured, as he heard a bumping and scraping behind him and saw the other two bobs plunge into the line of his vision. They had hung back a little, owing to an unevenness in the road.

The three racers were once more in line and were gathering speed with every foot they swayed forward. That the Cardiff boys had a good chance was early seen as they noted their sled fairly lift itself from the ground under the momentum which increased each second. Roger held on tightly for fear of being pitched off. The wind was whistling loudly in his ears, and his face was bitten by the cold. He had never ridden so fast in his life before.

Lafayette hill consisted of a series of little slopes and ascents, with small level stretches in between. The road curved in and out, now to the left, now to the right, and every once in a while would come a "thank-ye-ma'am." Over these bumps the bob flew, and when it came down, after taking the leap, it jolted every member of the Cardiff crew.

The pace was comparatively slow for the first quarter of a mile. Then the hill, which had not curved yet, became steeper. When the bobs reached this point the speed really became very swift, and the heavy sleds seemed to merely glide over the frozen ice and snow.

It was now a race in earnest, with the three contesting crews on even terms. They were about ten feet apart from side to side. The captains, with tense muscles, were guid-

ing their easily swerved bobs, their eyes fastened on the slope before them.

Up to this time there had been no use for the stern wheel on the Cardiff sled, Tom Baker merely holding the rear bob rigid with it and keeping it straight in place, while Adrian did all the guiding necessary, which so far had been little, as the hill was without a turn. The wind was so strong, as the bobs skimmed through it, that talking was hardly possible. If a boy opened his mouth, not thinking, he was liable to find himself gasping for breath.

From somewhere behind him Roger heard an exclamation coming from a member of the Cardiff crew. He turned his head and was startled to see that instead of the Lafayette and Onativia sleds being in line with him, both bobs were now ahead of Cardiff, the Lafayette boys being half a length in advance and the other a quarter. It began to look as though the happenings of past years were to be repeated and Cardiff beaten. But Adrian showed no evidence of fear that he might be defeated again. Indeed he smiled a bit as he noted the two other bobs leaving him behind. He kept on smiling as they drew ahead, urged on by greater weight, better runners, or a smoother condition of the snowy roadbed.

The first turn of the hill was now reached and the three bobs took it at a speed that caused them to careen to one side and skim along on single runners for a time, while the boys momentarily feared an upset.

The big sleds righted, however, and whizzed along,

covering a half mile in about two minutes, and thus being about a quarter way over the course.

After the first turn of the road the Cardiff sled caught up somewhat on its competitors, so that when the second curve in the hill came the three bobs were almost in line again. Thus seesawing, one losing and another gaining a slight advantage, a fourth quarter mile was passed in quicker speed, leaving about half the two-mile journey to finish.

The contestants were now approaching the biggest turn in the hill, a long swing to the left, around a very steep part, the most dangerous place in the race, and one that all the captains dreaded. They gripped the steering-wheels more strongly, and every member of the crews clung to their seats and braced their feet.

Once again did the Cardiff sled seem to lag behind, and its crew noted with dismay that the two other coasters had passed them. As they were about to round the turn Adrian's bob was two lengths in the rear, and his comrades feared the race was lost to them, as there was little chance of catching up, once the Lafayette and Onativia sleds began to whizz down the steep incline.

Then something unexpected happened, — something that made Roger and the other members of the Cardiff crew catch their breaths — something that Adrian had planned and had been waiting anxiously for.

Just for one brief instant Roger noted that the turn of the road now hid the other two sleds. Had the road kept straight on, instead of curving to the left as it did, it would

have crossed a wide field, and then joined itself, so to speak, farther on. It was as if the curve was a big bent bow, and the road, if continued straight, would be represented by the bowstring. Though there was a path which cut off the curve and shortened the road for pedestrians, it was considered too steep and risky for teams, hence the curve. And it was down this incline, this cut-off, that Adrian proposed to guide his sled.

By so doing he would save a quarter of a mile, and if all went well he would come out into the main road again ahead of his rivals. But the way was dangerous, inasmuch as at the end it was necessary to make a sudden turn to the left to avoid a huge rock and to get back into the main thoroughfare.

With a whizz and a scraping of snow and ice the Cardiff sled left the beaten road and plunged into the almost unbroken snow of the fields. A fence lined the highway, but when Adrian steered the bob toward it the bars were down. The captain had seen to that. Before Roger and the other boys knew what was happening, they found themselves skimming across the field that stretched white and untrampled before them. Some thought it was an accident and cried out in alarm, but a shout from Adrian reassured every one.

The way was full of perils, for the field through which the straight path lay was not as level as the road. Fortunately the snow had melted and frozen again very hard, so that the surface was almost like a sheet of ice.

My, but how that sled did glide along! The runners

rang in the cold air as they rubbed along the snow and ice, which flew up on both sides of the boys like a miniature storm of white flakes. On and on went the Cardiff bob, like a big bird skimming along. In less than a minute it had approached the dangerous turn, around which it was necessary to swing to get back into the road. Could Adrian make it?

"All ready, Tom!" sung out Adrian. "Look out for the turn!" and Tom Baker tightened his grip on the rear steering-wheel.

"I 'm ready," he called back.

The next instant they were at the curve. If the bob, heavy with the load of boys, kept straight on, it would hit the huge rock with a terrible crash. Could Adrian pass it safely?

It was a second of intense expectation on the part of the crew. Then they felt a sudden swerve, and instinctively leaned to the left, to bring all the weight possible on the runners on that side, to keep them from skidding. There was a shrill screeching and squeaking of the snow and a shower of white flakes. Adrian tugged with all his might at his wheel. And then the wisdom and the great necessity of having the rear sled movable and steerable was apparent. For, had it not been, the sudden and short sweep could never have been made.

A second after Adrian twisted his wheel Tom Baker did likewise. The rear end of the bob swung as if a giant hand had sent it around. It almost grazed the big boulder, missing it by a few inches. The sled hung and quivered

for an instant on the very edge of the turn, and suddenly, with a motion that almost upset it, the bob righted and swept into the main road.

The great feat had been accomplished safely, and Adrian felt his heart thrill.

Once fairly in the road, every one looked for a sign of the other sleds. Was the Cardiff bob too late? Was their racer ahead or behind the others? These were questions that tugged anxiously at the hearts of the boys. But there was little time for Adrian to think of this, for the control of the bob, moving like a locomotive, needed all his attention, and Tom Baker's as well. There was another sharp turn to make, and it took all of the two steersmen's strength to twist the wheels. Then the sled shot into a straight incline, the last quarter mile of the course.

As the Cardiff sled was speeding on there came a shout of dismay from behind it, for the Lafayette racer, and that of Onativia, on a line with it, whizzed around the curve. Well might they shout, for they were distanced, and with no chance to regain the intervening ground which Adrian had so daringly and so skilfully covered.

In another minute the race was over. The Cardiff sled glided down the last declivity, and into the main street of the town, through the crowd of admiring people who had gathered. Adrian steered to a patch of ashes that had been sprinkled to retard the speed of the bobs at the end. As the Cardiff boys leaped from their still slowly moving racer, to be greeted with hearty hand clasps and shouts of victory, the Lafayette sled came along, with that of Onativia be-

hind it. It was a clean-cut, decisive victory for Cardiff, and even the vanquished ones had to admit it. Adrian's plan had worked out exactly as he hoped, and had saved the day; and to him the credit of the race was due, as all Cardiff joyfully admitted.

For a few minutes Adrian, Roger, and the other members of the crew could not break away from the admiring crowd.

"Three cheers for the Cardiff boys!" called some one, and they were given with a will.

"And three cheers for Adrian Kimball!" shouted Captain Smather of the Lafayette bob.

The shouts rang out louder than before, and Adrian got even redder in the face than the biting wind had made him.

It was a great day for Cardiff.

CHAPTER XV

STRANGERS IN TOWN

It was several days before the people of Cardiff were done talking about the bob sled race, and it was much longer ere the boys of the crew and Roger and Adrian got beyond telling each other their feelings at the various stages of the perilous journey. Mr. Kimball was proud of his son's achievement, and Mrs. Kimball was thankful no one had been hurt. So the memorable contest passed into local history, and no doubt if you should go to Cardiff now, you would learn all about it much better than it is told here.

Winter now settled down over the valley, and it was a severe season, as Roger found. Yet, though it was much colder than ever he had known it to be in New York, the lower temperature did not affect him so much as the frosty weather at home, since the atmosphere was a dry one, differing in this respect from the penetrating damp cold of the region near the Atlantic.

Thanksgiving came, with its feasting, its gathering of old friends and relatives about the fireside, and all its happiness, and Roger thought it was the jolliest holiday of the year. Never was there such a big, crisp-brown

roasted turkey, never so much cranberry sauce, never such stacks of white celery, never such good gravy, such sweet hickory nuts, such white popcorn, such rosy-cheeked apples, nor such fine cider. The meal lasted all day, and at night every one voted they had enough to last them a week.

December saw Cardiff snowbound, and for a week the village was cut off from communication with the other towns because of the big drifts that filled the valley. Christmas brought the usual joys, and Roger was well remembered by the folks at home. There was a welcome letter, also, from his father, in which Mr. Anderson said how glad he was that his son's health was improving so rapidly. Then there was a box that contained some books that he had long wished for and a bright five-dollar gold-piece.

The new year came, and winter, with all its old-fashioned severity, held Cardiff tight and fast. It snowed, and snowed, and snowed again.

Then there was nothing to do but stay in the house, or after a trip to the barn and the finishing of the chores to journey to the village store. 'Adrian began to attend school, and occasionally Roger went with him, to sit in the classroom, and listen to the recitations. But there was plenty of time before and after school, for fun. The two boys went coasting and skating, and it was at these sports Roger found he had much to learn from his cousin and the other country boys, who could glide along over the frozen mill pond, from morning until night, and never seem to tire.

"Wa'al," remarked Mr. Kimball, as he came home from Hank Mack's store, one cold night, stamping the snow from his boots in the wood-shed, "wa'al, I hope it 's cloudy t'morrow."

"Why?" asked Roger, who thought the more sun there was in winter the better it must be.

"Why? So 's thi' b'ar won't see his shadder."

"What if he does see his shadow?"

"Land a' Goshen, th' boy never hearn tell a' Candelmas Day," ejaculated Mr. Kimball. "You see," he explained, "there 's an ole sayin' 'n' I got it from my granddad, thet goes suthin' like this: 'Candlemas Day, half yer pork, 'n' half yer hay.' Thet means, 'cordin' t' my way a' thinkin' thet t'morrow 's 'bout th' middle a' winter, 'n' a keerful farmer 'll only hev half his produce eat up. Ye know b'ars go inter holler logs t' sleep all winter. Come February second, which is Candlemas Day, there 's a theory they come out t' see how th' weather is.

"Ef th' sun shines so 's t' throw a shadder on th' ground, it skeers th' b'ar so, he skedaddles back inter his holler log, 'n' sleeps fer six weeks more, durin' which time we hev winter. But, ef th' sun don't shine, 'n' thar ain't no shadder, th' b'ar 's satisfied. He don't git skeered, 'n' only goes back in his log fer four weeks more sleep, which means an early spring. So ye see why I don't want th' sun t' shine t'morrow."

"I see," laughed Roger, as Mr. Kimball finished his explanation. "Will you have half your pork and half your hay left by to-morrow?"

"I calalate so," responded Mr. Kimball, "I calalate so."

The sun did n't shine next day, and Mr. Kimball was happy. For the following few days it snowed, and Roger began to feel that there would be several months more of winter, instead of the proverbial four weeks, but his uncle did n't seem to worry.

Whether it was due to the bear's action or not, there was an early spring that year. The bluebirds came about the middle of March, and farmers began their plowing several weeks ahead of the usual time. Every one was glad that winter was over, though Roger and the other boys in Cardiff had enjoyed it very much, and many of them wished for a second contest with the bobs down Lafayette hill. Gradually the days got warmer, and the damp earth gave out a pleasant odor that promised a ready sprouting of the seeds.

One pleasant evening toward the end of April, when the sun peeped out, just before setting, after a smart little shower, Roger went to the post-office, to wait for the stage to come in with the mail. Adrian was not with him, for he had some chores to do, and of late Roger had fallen into the habit of going to the village alone occasionally.

He sat on the steps of Hank Mack's general store, which also contained the post-office, talking with several boys, whose acquaintance he had made since he arrived in Cardiff.

"There she comes," cried Frank Dobbs, as he pointed

to a moving object half a mile away. Roger looked and saw the stage, which advanced rapidly and in a few minutes drew up at the steps with a flourish. Porter Amidown jumped off, lugging the heavy mail bag into the little room partitioned off from the main store, where the letters and papers would be sorted and put in the different boxes.

Most of the boys followed Porter inside, but Roger lingered on the steps to see if the stage brought any passengers. He saw Enberry Took alight from the driver's high seat, and the boy nodded to him. Then from inside the vehicle two men got out. One was an elderly gentleman, bearing a valise of which he seemed to take great care. His companion was younger, and, when he had stepped out he lifted after him a long, three-legged instrument, of the kind Roger had often seen surveyors use. The younger man also carried a small satchel, which he handled as if it contained something of value.

"Where's the hotel; that is, Crownheart's hotel?" asked the younger man of Roger, who just then was the only person at hand.

"Right over there, sir," pointing to the single inn of which the village boasted, and which stood a little way up the hill, beyond the post-office.

"Thanks, my boy," said the inquirer. Then to his companion, "This way, Mr. Dudley. It does n't look very promising, to be sure, but then, you know, you never can tell by the looks of a toad how far it can jump. I guess we can stand it for a night or two, until we find out whether

there is any truth in this report or not," and the two men started toward the Pine Tree Inn, as Abe Crownheart called his hotel.

Roger stood looking at the strangers for a minute, wondering what their object might be in coming to Cardiff with their instrument and the valises, and he puzzled over the younger man's last words. Then dismissing the matter from his mind, he went in for the mail. When he found a letter for him from home, he was so delighted that he forgot all about the two new arrivals.

Abe Crownheart was considerably surprised when Mr. Dudley and Mr. Ranquist, as the men introduced themselves, appeared at his hotel and asked for accommodations.

"I suppose we can have a bed," suggested Mr. Dudley.

"And something to eat, don't forget that," put in Mr. Ranquist. "That twelve-mile stage journey has given me a tremendous appetite."

"Wa'al," began Mr. Crownheart, slowly, as if trying to think of something to say, — "wa'al, t' be honest 'ith ye, we don't hev much call fer lodgins fer man 'n' beast here. Cou'se I kin guv ye suthin' t' eat, but th' bed — um — d' ye mind both sleepin' in th' same room?"

"We would prefer it, if there are separate beds," said Mr. Dudley.

"I guess Mrs. Crownheart kin fix ye up then. Ye see we ain't very strong on sleepin' quarters, 'ceptin' fer our own family. Last time we hed boarders were quite a number a' years ago, in fact when th' Cardiff giant were

first diskivered. I s'pose ye hearn tell a' thet," and he paused for an answer.

Mr. Dudley nodded.

"Yep," went on Abe, "th' figger were diskivered right acrost th' valley here, 'n' I boarded some a' th' men what were exhibitin' it. I recollect how —"

"I dare say," broke in Mr. Dudley, shortly, "I have heard considerable about that giant fraud, and some future day I will be glad to discuss the various features of it with you, but now, my dear Mr. Crowhead —"

"Crownheart, sir, that 's my name, — Crownheart, not Crowhead," said Abe, a little nettled. "It 's right on the sign."

"Oh, yes, to be sure, Crownheart, I beg your pardon, exceedingly stupid of me. No offence, I assure you, my eyesight is not as good as it once was."

"Least said soonest mended," answered Mr. Crownheart, smiling good-naturedly. "Thet giant —"

"I was about to suggest," broke in Mr. Dudley once more, "that if it was all the same to you, Mr. Crownheart, Mr. Ranquist and I would go to our room, and get ready for supper, which at the present time is something I would rather discuss than any number of stone giants."

"If you 'll kindly allow us to register, we 'll go upstairs, I think," said Mr. Ranquist.

"Wa'al, 's I were sayin'," went on Mr. Crownheart, apparently not heeding the suggestions, "we ain't been called on t' lodge anybody sence th' giant were dug up. Howsomever, I guess I kin accommodate ye. Supper 's a

leetle easier t' figger out than th' beddin' question. A meal is suthin' we kin rassal 'ith t' some advantage."

"Shall we register?" asked Mr. Dudley, getting a little impatient. "We don't know how long we may stay. Probably a week."

"Wa'al, we ain't in th' habit a' havin' folks register," said the inn-keeper. "To be honest 'ith ye, I don't know 's we got any convenience fer it. Uster be a book 'round here sommers, but I swan I don't know what 's become of it. Prob'ly th' boys hev used it t' keep th' score a' their cribbage games in. Here, scribble yer names down on thet, 'n' ef I come acrost th' book some day, I 'll fill 'em in. 'T ain't no ways particular, anyhow," and he shoved over a bit of rough brown wrapping-paper, on which his guests wrote their names, adding after them, "New York City."

"From N' York, eh?" said Mr. Crownheart, looking at what the two men had put down. "Wa'al, we 've got another N' Yorker here."

"You don't say so," began Mr. Dudley, eagerly, "who is he, an engin—" and he stopped suddenly, as his companion nudged him warningly.

"Why, he 's Bert Kimball 's nephew," said Mr. Crownheart. "Mebby ye seen th' lad. He were 'ith a lot a' others on th' steps a' th' post-office, waitin' fer th' stage t' come in."

"Oh, yes, that must have been the boy who showed us your hotel," said Mr. Ranquist, quickly, and Mr. Dudley appeared much relieved.

"He 's up here fer his health," went on Abe. "Cardiff 's healthy 'nuff fer anybody. Be you two out here fer thet, or be ye surveyin' fer a railroad?" and the innkeeper looked significantly at the instrument Mr. Ranquist had.

"Well, we heard this village was a healthy place," put in Mr. Dudley, the older man, "and so we thought we 'd come and see for ourselves. We might do a little surveying also, but whether for a railroad or not is n't for us to say. Suppose you show us to our room now."

"All right," answered Mr. Crownheart, a little miffed that his guests had not declared their business in response to his gentle hint. "Jest come along. 'T ain't fixed up yet, but I 'll hev it 'tended t' right away," and he led the men to the upper floor.

At the supper table that evening Roger recalled the arrival of the two strangers in the stage, and remarked casually to his uncle that Mr. Crownheart had some one at his hotel at last.

"I saw them come in and showed them where to go," said Roger, detailing the circumstances.

"I wonder what they want?" remarked Mr. Kimball, in a musing tone. "Don't seem 's ef any railroad 'd run out here, yet ye say they hed a surveyor's three-legged contraption with 'em, Roger. Wa'al, I don't know 's it concerns me any, 'less they want t' buy some a' my land, so 's I could git money t' meet thet ole mortgage 'ith. I 've got a hard scrabble ahead a' me," and the farmer's face took on a worried look, just as on the night when he

received the letter containing the bad news about the loss of his savings.

Yet, though Mr. Kimball did not know it, the arrival of the two strangers was destined to be of considerable concern and importance to him, and that not very far distant.

CHAPTER XVI

QUEER OPERATIONS

It was a few days after the arrival of the two strangers in town that Roger and Adrian were walking along the road that led to the village of Tully. There was nothing for them to do about the farm just then, and Adrian thought it would be a good plan to "prospect" a bit, as he called it, to see if he might come upon a deposit of old bones anywhere. For he had not forgotten his plan of selling them, or anything else he might happen upon, to raise all the money he could.

It was a fine, warm spring day, with the air full of sweet smells from the damp earth, with the tender green grass just showing above the brown soil and tiny leaves bursting from the trees. The two boys hurried on, for they too felt the sap running up in their veins, and they wanted to hop and skip and shout aloud in the very enjoyment of being alive. As for Roger, he never felt better in his life, and he knew that even his short stay in the country, though it had been during a severe and cold winter, had been of great benefit to him.

"I 'll beat you down to the old button-ball tree," cried Adrian suddenly, pointing to a big sycamore about six hundred feet ahead of them on the road.

"I 'll go you."

"One, two, three," counted Adrian, "Ready!" and the boys were off at the word.

For nearly three quarters of the distance Roger held his own with his cousin. Then the more sturdy legs of the country boy and his better wind told, and he drew gradually away, though Roger did not give up until the very end, when Adrian finished five feet in advance.

"You—did—better—than—I thought—you would," panted Adrian, as he flopped down on the grass under the tree to rest.

"I 'm picking up," admitted Roger, modestly. "I did n't think I could keep up at all. I never could run as far as this without getting a pain in my side. But it don't seem to bother me a bit now."

"Keep at it, and when you get back home, you 'll be able to challenge the best of 'em," said Adrian, as he jumped up to throw a stone at a tin can in the road, hitting the object with a resounding clang.

The boys resumed their walk, talking on topics of interest to them and keeping their eyes "peeled," as Adrian expressed it, for old bones, that they might know where to locate them when they came another day. They had gone about two miles, rambling slowly along, when, as they turned a bend in the road, they caught sight of two men carrying valises, hurrying on, just ahead of them.

"They look like book agents," ventured Adrian.

Roger glanced sharply at the receding figures.

"Why," he exclaimed, "they are the two men who are

boarding at Crownheart's hotel, the ones who came in on the stage the other night. I guess they must be looking over the ground for the new railroad."

"Let 's chase after them and see what they do," suggested Adrian, and then the boys, having some object in their walk, quickened their pace to catch up to Mr. Dudley and Mr. Ranquist. In a few minutes the men reached an open field on the left side of the road, — a pasture filled with big stones and bowlders that had fallen from a great ledge of rock two hundred feet high or more, which cropped out about seven hundred feet from the highway, and rose, almost abruptly, from the level of the field.

"Hold on a minute," cautioned Adrian, as he saw the men stop. "Don't let them catch us playing 'I spy'; they might not want us to follow them, even though we have a right to go where we please. We 'll just wait by the tree until we see which way they turn."

The boys sat down in the shade of a big maple.

"What 's that queer smell," asked Roger suddenly, sniffing the air.

"Sulphur spring," explained Adrian. "This is what they call 'Stony Farm.' Belongs to Jim Eaton, and about all it 's good for is to pasture sheep. The sulphur spring comes out of that rocky ledge and runs across under the road. Some folks say the water 's healthy, but it tastes too much like rotten eggs for me. The cattle won't drink it. But say, those men are going in," and he rose to peer at them.

Mr. Dudley could be seen pointing toward the big rocky hill, and he appeared to be urging his companion to advance toward it. The younger man seemed to be in favor of going farther on before turning off the road, and he indicated a place about half a mile distant. But in the end the older man prevailed, and the two, after a cautious glance on all sides, struck into the field and made their way to a path that led up on top of the out-cropping rock. After waiting until the men had well advanced, Roger and Adrian took after them.

Proceeding slowly along, the boys saw the men ascend to the top of the big ledge, and then turn to the left, going back in the direction they had come from. On top of the rocks was a sort of path, made by the sheep and cows that used it to pass into the woods during hot days. The men walked along this, for perhaps a mile, stopping every now and then to examine the ground closely. Once in a while the younger man would chip off a bit of rock, which he and his companion would look at carefully.

"I guess they 're geologists getting specimens," ventured Roger.

"Maybe," admitted Adrian, who was beginning to lose interest in the men since they seemed to be doing nothing out of the ordinary. The boys followed along in silence, taking care to keep from observation.

Suddenly the two men stopped. The older one set his valise down and took something from it. This he seemed to be fitting together, and when he had finished he had

a long, slender steel rod, which Mr. Ranquist, after carefully selecting a place on the surface, shoved into the soil. He twisted it about and then drew it up, after which he and Mr. Dudley carefully examined the end that had gone down into the earth.

"I have it!" exclaimed Roger. "They 're prospecting for oil, that 's what they are. They 're not railroad surveyors at all."

"Perhaps they 're after gold," suggested Adrian, all excited at the very thought. "Cracky! If there should be gold in Cardiff, would n't it be great? If there was only a little on dad's land, he would n't have to worry about that mortgage."

Adrian had started forward, forgetting the caution he previously used to prevent the men from observing him, and as he did so he dislodged a big stone, which crashed down the hillside with a clatter and bang. At the sound both men looked up suddenly and saw the startled and surprised boys. Mr. Dudley made a quick motion of closing the valise and seemed about to hurry on. But with a hasty gesture Mr. Ranquist detained him and spoke a few hurried words to his companion. Then, turning, the young engineer came slowly toward the boys, who did not know whether to go or stay.

"Live around here?" asked Mr. Ranquist, as he drew near Roger and Adrian.

"'Bout two miles — over to Cardiff," answered Adrian.

"Oh, yes. Um. Nice day, is n't it? Are you hunting?" the man asked, suddenly.

"Nope," from Adrian.

"Fishing?"

"Nope."

"What, then?"

"Prospecting."

"Prospecting?"

"Yep."

"What after?"

"Old bones."

"Old bones? Are you joking, my lad?"

"No, sir, not a bit. We 're looking for old bones. They 'll bring half a cent a pound, you know," and there was not the trace of a smile on Adrian's face.

"Oh, I see. Of course. Old bones. Humph! Well," and Mr. Ranquist did not seem to know whether to smile or frown. "Well, my friend and I were not exactly looking for old bones. Old stones are more in our line. You see we came out here on a visit and thought we 'd take a walk out this way. We 've found a fine lot of old stones," and Mr. Ranquist motioned rather vaguely toward his companion. "What are you boys after, anyhow?" he finished, suddenly.

"Nothing in particular," put in Roger, and at the sound of his voice, Mr. Ranquist turned quickly.

"Oh, it 's our friend of the post-office," he exclaimed. "I remember you now. How are you?"

"Pretty well," replied Roger.

"Hum. Glad to hear it," responded Mr. Ranquist. "You 're from New York, are n't you? Well, so are we,

Mr. Dudley and I. Came here to sort of rest up and look around. Nice place, is n't it?"

"I think so," from Roger.

"Yes. Um. Well, Mr. Dudley and I had nothing to do so we sauntered out here."

"Is the railroad going through this place?" asked Adrian. "We heard you were railroad surveyors," he went on.

Mr. Ranquist glanced quickly at the two boys and seemed to be weighing something in his mind. Advancing toward Adrian, he said:

"Now you two young men appear to be smart and bright. If I tell you something can you keep it secret?"

"Yes, sir," chorused the two boys.

"Well, then, we are getting ready to lay out a line through here. But we don't want people to know it yet, because if they did they 'd ask a good deal more for their land, which we might need, than it would be worth to us. We 're willing, or that is the men who are putting the line through, are ready to pay a good price for the property, but not too much. So we came out here, without letting any one know, to look the ground over and see how it lays. Then if we like it we 'll make an offer. But we don't want it talked about until we 're ready to have it, that a railroad is likely to come through the valley. Do you understand?"

The boys nodded gravely.

"Now," went on Mr. Ranquist, "I like your looks, and as we need two bright, smart boys who know this part of

the country well, we might like to engage you. How would you consider such a proposition?"

Adrian and Roger were silent a moment, thinking. They were wondering if they could properly accept the offer.

"It won't interfere with anything else you have to do," continued Mr. Ranquist. "We shall want you only once in a while to guide us around these parts. What do you say?"

"How much?" asked Adrian, always practical.

"Five dollars each," said Mr. Ranquist, quickly.

"For which we 're to show you around when you want us and say nothing about a railroad line coming through," stipulated the boy.

"Exactly. I don't mind you telling your folks, but no one else."

"It 's a go, if Roger agrees."

"Oh, I 'll agree fast enough," put in Roger.

"Then here 's your money," said Mr. Ranquist, as if he feared the boys might change their minds. He drew some bills from his pocket, stripped off two crisp bank notes, and passed five dollars each to Roger and Adrian. The boys took the cash as if they had been used to that sort of thing all their lives.

"Now," said Mr. Ranquist, "I guess we won't need you to-day, for as a matter of fact we 're going back to the hotel. But can you come with us the day after to-morrow? We want to travel along this ridge, back into the hills, and we don't want to run the chance of getting

lost. So can you meet us at the Cardiff Inn right after dinner?"

"I guess so," answered Adrian. "Yes, sir, we'll be there," and he slyly nudged Roger, warning him to make no answer.

Then the boys turned to go back down the hill, leaving Mr. Dudley and Mr. Ranquist to follow when they pleased. As Roger was about to go away he fancied he heard the older man remonstrating with Mr. Ranquist.

"We need those boys," he thought he heard the younger man say. "They'll come in handy, and I had to hire them. They were altogether too suspicious and knowing, and now I have thrown them off the track."

At which expression Roger wondered somewhat, and all the way home he was busy thinking of the mysterious operations of the new arrivals in Cardiff.

CHAPTER XVII

ROGER SUSPECTS

So quickly had it all happened that Roger and Adrian hardly realized they had just received what was, to them, quite a sum of money. They entered the house all excitement, after a brisk walk, and Adrian told his father how he and his cousin had been engaged as guides.

"Wa'al, I must say ye airned th' money easy," said Mr. Kimball.

"Yes, and we can get more," Adrian exclaimed. "We 're to go with the men day after to-morrow, to show them the way. Say, dad, what do you s'pose they want of a railroad out here?"

"It 's hard t' say what them railroad fellers is up t'," answered Mr. Kimball. "Ye can't even tell whether they 're goin' t' put a railroad through er not."

"But they said they were," asserted Adrian.

"Humph!" was all his father answered, with a little snort. He was too concerned with his own matters to think about the possibility of a railroad, especially at this time.

But the news soon spread around Cardiff, in spite of the fact that the boys maintained a strict silence, that a

railroad or a trolley line was to go through the valley, and the residents were all talking about the possibility of it the next day after Roger and Adrian had met the two engineers. For the secret of the cousins having been hired as guides got out somehow, though the boys did not tell, and they were the envy of their companions. The less fortunate lads of Cardiff determined to take the first opportunities of offering their services to Mr. Dudley and Mr. Ranquist.

The day after the boys' engagement Mr. Kimball announced that a lot of brush in the vineyard needed burning, so that the ground might be cultivated. Adrian and Roger thought the task so much like play they asked to be allowed to build the fires.

Mr. Kimball was glad enough to have them undertake the task. Armed with long rakes the boys started up the hill and soon had heaped up several big piles of brush, dry leaves and twigs, which Adrian set fire to, taking care that none of the vines were scorched. A little wearied by his labors, Roger laid aside his rake, and while the flames were eating their way well into the débris, he strolled farther up the hill. It was rather a warm, pleasant day, and the woods, which stretched out before him, seemed to invite him to come in and see how the trees were putting on their full summer outfits of green leaves.

Before he realized it Roger had gone some distance from the vineyard, and only occasionally could he catch a glimpse of the smoke from the brush-wood fires. There was scarcely a sound to break the silence, save the piping

of some early birds, and the boy sat down on a rock under a big chestnut tree to rest. On a fallen log near him a bright green lizard crawled out to bask in the sunshine. Then a rustling in the dried leaves on the ground caught his ear. He looked in that direction to see a snake wriggle into view. He tossed a bit of bark toward the reptile and in an instant it had disappeared in alarm. The lad drew a long, deep breath, filling his lungs with the sweet, balmy spring odor of the woods, — a smell that seemed laden with health.

"My! But that 's fine!" he exclaimed.

The next minute he was startled by a sound, as if some one had stepped on and broken a tree branch. Glancing up the hill he saw, rather indistinctly, some moving body.

"I guess it 's a cow," he remarked.

Then he looked more closely.

"Two cows," he added, as he noted a second form. "No, it is n't either," he corrected himself a moment later, "it 's two men," and he rose to get a better view. "It 's Mr. Dudley and Mr. Ranquist. I guess they did n't want to wait until to-morrow to go prospecting. I wonder what they 're doing on Uncle Bert's hill. I guess it won't do any harm to watch and find out. If they strike gold, or decide to run a railroad here, I might as well know it. I suspect those men are after something, and they 're not telling what it is either," he concluded, rather wisely. "Well, here goes for a little detective work."

Using as much caution as if he was trailing some wild and timid animal, Roger slowly made his way up the hill

and through the woods in the direction the two men had taken. He trod lightly, being careful not to step on any twigs or branches, which might snap and betray his presence. For he did not want the men to discover him. Not that he was doing anything wrong, or anything he had not a right to do, for the men were on his uncle's land, and Roger felt he should be interested in whatever they did. For a quarter of a mile he trailed after Mr. Dudley and Mr. Ranquist, easily keeping them in sight, yet remaining hidden himself, since they seemed to have no suspicion they were being followed.

In a little hollow, about three hundred feet away from the spring which burst out of the side hill, and which served to furnish drinking water for Mr. Kimball's house, the two men came to a halt. Roger hid himself behind a big stone, somewhat above them, to watch. Mr. Ranquist drew from his valise a number of pieces of metal, which he screwed together until he had a rod about a yard long. Then, with a hammer, he proceeded to drive this downward into the earth. When it had been forced almost out of sight he screwed another section on from above and drove this down, and so on, until he had sent the slender steel rod to a depth of twenty feet into the earth. Roger noticed that the blows of the hammer, as they struck, produced no sound beyond a dull thud, which, close as he was, he could scarcely hear.

"He must have rubber on the hammer," said the boy, "or something to deaden the blows. He 's afraid some one will hear him. I wonder what in the world they can be up

to? I must get a little nearer, so I can listen to what they are saying."

He was a little fearful about advancing any farther as he could not tell but that the sound of his movements might come to the ears of the men, now they had stopped walking and could hear better. He looked to see if he could approach under cover, and then he spied a fallen log, extending down hill, toward the centre of the little glade, in which the men were at work on their mysterious errand.

The farther end of the tree trunk was up against a large bowlder, behind which Roger might lie hidden, as secure as he was in the position he had first selected, if he could but reach it unobserved, and he thought he might by crawling along under the protecting shadow of the log. So with this end in view, he proceeded to act. He stretched out on his stomach, regardless of his clothes, like a big snake, and then he began to slowly wriggle toward the men.

It was not easy work, as he dared not raise himself more than a few inches from the ground without the danger of being seen above the log. Along the dried leaves and grass he went, pausing every few minutes to peep cautiously over his screen to see if the men were aware of his presence. They seemed all unsuspicious that they were being watched by a sharp-eyed lad, and continued to drive the rod deeper into the earth. At length, after about five minutes of cautious crawling, Roger reached the rock, and he curled himself up behind it with a sigh of satisfaction.

He was now within sixty feet of the men and could

easily hear all they said, unless they spoke in whispers, which they were not likely to do. But the boy seemed to have had his trouble for his pains, for Mr. Dudley and Mr. Ranquist were not saying a word to each other. They were intent on the work, and Roger was keenly disappointed as, just before he started to crawl nearer, he had heard the murmur of their voices in earnest conversation.

But now Mr. Ranquist appeared to have used up all the sections of the steel rod. However, his valise had more tools in it, for he drew out a short iron handle, from which dangled a length of stout chain links. This chain he wound about the top part of the rod, which projected about a foot from the ground. The loose end of the links he fastened to the handle again. Then he and Mr. Dudley, taking a firm hold of the short bar, proceeded to twist the rod around in the earth. Roger watched them wonderingly. They spent five minutes in this operation, and then ceased, to sit down on the grass and rest.

"Do you think we'll strike it?" Roger heard Mr. Dudley ask his companion.

"Can't say for sure, but it looks very promising," was the reply.

"Is it gold, or is it oil?" Roger asked himself, softly.

Next, as he watched, he saw Mr. Ranquist take another tool from his valise, which seemed to contain the outfit of a small machine shop. This last instrument was like a lifting jack, very small and light, but exceedingly powerful. With it the two men easily pulled the rod up from where they had driven it in the ground, lifting it section by

section and unscrewing each one. They seemed to be eager and anxious as they came toward the end, and as the last piece of steel emerged from the small hole, they both bent forward and looked at it closely. They appeared much excited at what they saw, and Mr. Ranquist threw his hat in the air and capered about like a boy.

"Hurrah!" Roger heard him shout, softly, to be sure, for even in his excitement the engineer did not forget his caution. "Hurrah! We 've struck it all right. Now to get hold of the land before any of the people about here suspect. I 'll tell you, Dudley, our fortunes are made."

The older man seemed scarcely less excited than Mr. Ranquist. He wet his forefinger, touched the end of the rod with it, and then brought his finger to his tongue. He appeared to be tasting some substance. In a moment Mr. Ranquist followed his example, and then the look of triumph came on Mr. Dudley's face, as it had on the countenance of the younger engineer. Roger, forgetting his rôle of detective, raised himself up, trying to get a sight of the mysterious substance. In the gleam of the sun, on the point of the rod which Mr. Ranquist held, the boy beheld, rather faintly, however, the glitter of something white and sparkling, something that looked like the white crystals of snow.

Mr. Ranquist quickly whittled out a little stake from a tree branch and drove it into the small hole in the earth, whence he had drawn the rod. This done the men carefully packed their tools in the valise and started away. Roger watched them until they were out of sight. Then he

hurried to the spot. He pulled up the stake, expecting to see something to disclose the mystery and reward him for his investigation. But there was nothing to indicate what the men had found that pleased them so.

Roger was greatly disappointed. But he comforted himself with the reflection that, at least, he was on the track of the mystery. He thought quickly and realized that some older head than his must take up the problem now. Yet whom could he tell? Mr. Kimball, he reasoned, would hardly be in a position to give an expert opinion as to what was under the earth. Then, too, he did not want to raise false hopes for his uncle that might be shattered after investigation. He could not imagine what it was the men had found, that they regarded as of such value. They evidently expected to find it, which added to the complications. How did they know at about that spot something was hidden under the surface? Clearly it must be some mineral substance Roger thought, but what? It did n't seem to be gold, unless it was in some peculiar form. Whatever it was, would it be worth the trouble that might be necessary before it could be come upon and dug out, unless some one, who knew just what they were searching after, did the work? And it was evident that the two men did possess this knowledge, which was so needful.

Roger was in a dilemma, but he resolved to discover a way out, if possible. Carefully marking the location of the stake, that he might find it again, he started home. He came into the vineyard just as his cousin was clearing up the last of the brush.

"Well," said Adrian, "I thought maybe you had gone to the house."

"No," answered Roger, "I was just walking in the woods for my health," and he smiled a little.

For certain reasons he did not want even Adrian to know what he had seen.

"We 'll take a long walk to-morrow," said Adrian, breaking into a merry whistle. "But something tells me it is nearly supper-time. I 'm as hungry as a bear. Hi, Jack!" he called to the dog, and all three started for home, Roger in a sort of day-dream over what he had discovered.

CHAPTER XVIII

A BIG BLACK BEAR

Roger said nothing to the folks at the house of what he had observed. He had a plan, partly worked out in his mind, and he wanted to see whether or not he could accomplish anything before he told his uncle or cousin. He resolved to wait until after the next day and observe what happened when he and Adrian went to guide Mr. Dudley and Mr. Ranquist over the hills, for Roger shrewdly suspected that the men required no piloting to find what they sought. However, he thought it was not necessary to mention that to any one.

At the time appointed he and Adrian presented themselves at the Pine Tree Inn and asked for the two engineers. Mr. Ranquist came down.

"Ah," he said, looking at his watch and smiling, "you are prompt, I see. Mr. Dudley and I will be with you in a few minutes."

In a little while the two men appeared, both dressed in rough clothes suitable for a tramp through the woods.

"Well, boys," began Mr. Ranquist, pleasantly, "my friend and I are very anxious to take a little trip about the valley, and we would like particularly to visit the place

where the Cardiff giant was found. Can you show that spot to us?"

"Of course I can," said Adrian. "It's right over there," and he pointed to a broad stretch of meadows across the valley flats about three miles off.

"Over there, eh?" remarked Mr. Ranquist, "I had an idea it was back up this way," and he pointed in the opposite direction. "However, as long as it is not where I thought it was, we will defer our trip to see the resting-place of the big stone man until some other time. Mr. Dudley and I would like to get the lay of the land on this side of the hills that slope down into this part of the country," and he waved his hands toward the place where Roger had seen the two engineers at their mysterious operations. "Is there a good path up along there, and could you show us the way? We don't mind roughing it, but we dislike getting lost," finished Mr. Ranquist.

"I guess we can show you all right," said Adrian. "Do you want to start now?"

"I think so," Mr. Ranquist answered, so all four began their walk. Instead of going down the road toward the sulphur spring, which was the way the two engineers had taken first, Adrian suggested a shorter path. This, he said, would be to go up the Lafayette hill about a mile and then bear off to the right, where he knew of a fairly good trail. So it was decided to take this route. During the climb up the hill Roger recalled the thrilling ride down it a few months before. The boys kept slightly in advance of the men, who walked more slowly than their

younger companions, for the lads, in the excess of their muscular energy, wandered from side to side in the road, going over about twice as much ground as was really necessary. But they never noticed such a little thing as that.

Roger glanced back to see if the men were within earshot, and when he found they were not, he spoke to Adrian in a low voice.

"Say, Adrian, is there any way of getting near the spring on your father's place from the path we are to take?" he asked.

"Yes, but what do you want to do that for?"

"Why, if these men are looking for a location for a railroad it might not be a bad plan to show 'em some of your father's land. They might want a bit of it, and if they gave him a good price, as I 've heard railroads do, he could pay off that mortgage. No harm in trying."

"Say! That 's a good idea," exclaimed Adrian. "I 'll do it."

"Don't say anything," cautioned Roger. "Just kind of edge off in the right direction, and when we get to a certain place, I 'll say something. You leave it to me."

"But what 's up? What do you mean?" asked Adrian, with sudden interest.

"Oh, nothing in particular," answered Roger. "Look at that fox!" he shouted, quickly, as he picked up a stone and threw it at the animal.

"Where? Where is it?" yelled Adrian, all excitement.

"He 's gone now," said Roger, "but he was right there by that old stump."

"We 'll have to come up here with a trap and a gun if there 's foxes," decided Adrian. "Their skins bring good money."

The boys kept on up the hill and soon came to the place where they were to leave the main road and strike into the woods. They waited a few minutes for their older companions to catch up, and then took up the lead again. All four kept closely together now, so there was little chance for the boys to converse without being overheard. Accordingly they confined their talk to comment on what they saw along the path. Both listened intently to what the two men were saying, but Mr. Dudley and Mr. Ranquist were apparently exchanging opinions on past occurrences.

They talked of something which had taken place in New York. Not once did they refer to a railroad or anything like it. They seemed content to tramp along, paying no attention to the beauties of nature on every side of them. The trees, that bore more than half their summer suits of green, the soft moss under foot, the flitting of the birds from branch to branch — all these had no attractions for them. But to Roger such sights were a constant enjoyment, and he took in deep breaths of the balmy air, laden, as it was, with health.

They had gone about a mile along the path on the side of the hill, during which time the men had seemed content to follow the boys' lead. At length Adrian nudged Roger and pointed to a path that branched off from the main one.

"That will take you to our spring," he said, in a low tone.

"Go ahead down it then," replied Roger. "Maybe you 'll see something happen soon."

Wondering what his cousin could mean, Adrian advanced, and Roger glancing back noticed with satisfaction that the two men had followed them without question.

For ten minutes the boys led the way with never a word of protest from Mr. Dudley or Mr. Ranquist, who did not seem to notice they were going in a different direction from that which they desired. Suddenly a big rabbit darted across the path, almost at Mr. Dudley's feet. He started, looked at the animal, as if wondering how it came there, and then he glanced up, seeming to realize that he was at a spot he had not intended to reach.

"Why! Why! Boys!" he exclaimed, turning to the younger engineer.

"What is it?" broke in Mr. Ranquist.

"What are we coming this way for?" asked Mr. Dudley. "I thought we were going straight along the side of the hill. Instead, we are going down."

At this Mr. Ranquist looked alarmed as he glanced at the two boys.

"Well," said Roger, coming forward a few steps, "you see this path goes to a spring down in a little glade. We thought you might like to see it. If you 're going to build a railroad the spring would furnish water for the locomotives. There 's a good place for a depot down in the little glade, too."

"Why, why —," stammered Mr. Dudley.

"It looks as if there was coal there, too, — coal or — or something," he finished, looking narrowly at the men, "and coal and water might be good things for a railroad, it seems to me."

For a brief instant there came a dangerous look into Mr. Ranquist's eyes. His face grew pale, and he seemed to control himself with a great effort. Mr. Dudley also appeared very much surprised. Mr. Ranquist forced himself to burst into a laugh that had no mirth in it.

"Ha! Ha! Ha!" he shouted. "Not bad, eh, Mr. Dudley? Water for the engine. Well! Well! Well!"

He laughed again.

"Coal upon this hill! Oh, dear! Oh, dear! Well, my boy," he went on, clapping Roger on the back good-naturedly, "it 's very nice of you to think of these things for our railroad, but, bless you, we would n't want to stop in a place like this for coal or water. If the line goes through here," with a significant look at Mr. Dudley, "it will make only flying stops. I suppose this land, where the coal and water is, belongs to some friend of yours, eh?" and he looked at the boys narrowly.

"It 's my father's," broke in Adrian. "But I never knew there was coal on it. There 's a spring, and a good one, but nobody ever thought of looking for coal. I wish there was some."

"Why?" from Mr. Dudley, suddenly.

"Because," answered Adrian, "my father might get a good enough price for it, so 's he could sell some and pay off the mortgage on the rest."

"Oh, then the farm is mortgaged?"

"Yes." And then the boy seemed to realize that he was talking too freely to strangers, and he stopped.

"Well," went on Mr. Dudley, "I 'm sorry to say as far as I can see there 's not the least chance of any coal ever being found in this section of the country. It is not the kind of land where coal is located."

Adrian looked the disappointment he felt. He had really hoped there might be coal on his father's farm.

"Do you want to go down by the spring?" persisted Roger, starting off in that direction.

"Um, ah — yes. I think we might as well as not," said Mr. Ranquist, in spite of the obvious efforts Mr. Dudley made to have him say something different.

All four started off, but at that instant there came a sudden sound to the left. It was a crashing of the underbrush and bushes, as if some heavy, lumbering body was being forced through them. Then a black shape burst into view, and the next second a big, ungainly animal, tall and covered with dark fur, thrust itself into the open, while the wide-stretched mouth showed the lolling red tongue and glistening white fangs of an immense black bear.

For a moment neither men nor boys knew which way to turn. The beast, however, was not at all undecided in his movements. With a savage growl he came lurching clumsily forward, and the sight of his fierce anger filled the members of the little party with terror. Adrian was the first to appreciate the danger.

"Every one to a tree!" he shouted, "and take the

smallest and thinest that will hold you, or he 'll climb up after ! "

He made for a slender sapling and scrambled quickly up it, while the others lost no time in following his example. Mr. Dudley, in spite of his years, sprinted like a college chap getting down on a kick in the football field when he wants to nail the other man in his tracks. But though the engineer was quick, the brute was almost as nimble.

Just as Mr. Dudley got safely above the ground, in a tree that fortunately was directly in his path and not far away, the bear made a dangerous lunge for him with its front paws. The sharp claws caught the cloth of the man's trousers and held on for an instant. The bear pulled savagely, but, with a rip, the garments gave way and the claws slipped from the rent, leaving Mr. Dudley free.

The men and boys were now secure in trees above the ground, while below them, going from one sapling to another, the bear growled and foamed in his rage at seeing his enemies escape him. After making a tour of the place, and trying in vain to climb the tree where Mr. Dudley was perched, the beast squatted down on his haunches, in the centre of the group, and sat thus, awaiting developments.

" Well," remarked Mr. Ranquist, after a pause, " this is a pretty kettle of fish, I must admit."

" I would say it was four kettles," said Mr. Dudley, with an attempt at cheerfulness.

CHAPTER XIX

ROGER MAKES PLANS

For a few minutes after the exciting scrabble for trees, there was a deep silence among the four. They were all interested in the movements of the bear. Having squatted on his haunches for a little while, the beast dropped to a walking position, and strolled about, sniffing deeply at the foot of each sapling which held a human occupant. He uttered loud "woofs" of disgust, and then, standing under the tree where Mr. Dudley was, the animal acted as if he was going to climb up.

The brute's sharp claws tore showers of bark and wood from the slender trunk, and his efforts caused the sapling to shake considerable, making Mr. Dudley's perch somewhat insecure.

"Hold on there! Hold on!" exclaimed the engineer in a protesting tone. Then, as he saw the uselessness of ordering a bear he added more gently, "Oh, say, Bruin. Ho! ho! Easy now, that's a good fellow!" It seemed as though Mr. Dudley was talking to a restive horse.

The man's voice apparently angered the bear, which redoubled its efforts to get up the tree, though the slender trunk proved an effective barrier.

"Oh, I say now!" cried Mr. Dudley, looking helplessly at his companions, "call him off, some of you. This won't do at all. He'll shake me down and eat me. Call him off, can't you?"

"I'm afraid he doesn't care to be called," said Mr. Ranquist, with just the suspicion of a smile on his face. "He seems an obstinate sort of brute."

"But what's to be done, what's to be done?" inquired Mr. Dudley, testily. "We can't stay here all day, Ranquist, like ripe apples, waiting to be shaken down by this beast. Something must be done; I insist on it. I'll — I'll — What did you boys want to lead us into a bear's den for?" he asked, turning toward Roger and Adrian.

"We didn't know there were bears about," answered Adrian, a little crestfallen at the mishap. "There hasn't been any bears near Cardiff before in ten years."

"Stuff and nonsense! Stuff and nonsense!" interrupted Mr. Dudley shortly. "I believe you boys did this for a joke. If you did —"

"Oh, pshaw!" came from Mr. Ranquist, "of course it isn't the boys' fault. How could they help it?"

"Well, perhaps they couldn't," admitted Mr. Dudley, "but it's very unpleasant, to say the least."

Then the bear began another attack on the tree where Mr. Dudley was, with such savage energy that it needed all the engineer's strength to prevent himself from being shaken down.

"Oh! Oh!" cried Mr. Dudley, desperately. "Some-

thing will have to be done at once. Help! Help!" he yelled.

"Have n't either of you men a revolver?" called Roger.

"By Jove! I never thought of it!" said Mr. Ranquist, suddenly. "Of course I have. But I 'm not a very good shot, and, if I was, I 'm afraid the small bullets in my gun would n't cause his bearship much annoyance. It 's only a .22 calibre," he added.

Carefully balancing himself, the young engineer drew the weapon from his pocket. His movement seemed to interest bruin, who left his position under Mr. Dudley's tree, and ambled over to the sapling where Mr. Ranquist was perched, much to the relief of the older prospector.

"I 'm going to shoot," said Mr. Ranquist. "I don't know what will happen after it, so look out, every one."

Taking as good aim as he could, Mr. Ranquist fired at the brute. There was no evidence that the bullet hit, so he blazed away again. This was another miss, but the third attempt was more effective, for, with an angry roar, the animal dropped on all fours, and began clawing his snout with his left paw. A few spots of blood showed on the ground.

"You hit him! You hit him!" exclaimed Mr. Dudley, and, in his delight, he tried to caper about on his slender perch, with the result that he nearly tumbled off.

"Oh, yes, I hit him," admitted Mr. Ranquist, showing just a little pride in the achievement. "I winged him, but I 'll have to do better than that, if I want to persuade him to go away. These bullets are only flea-bites to him."

The little leaden pellet did not seem to cause the bear much suffering, but the pain angered him, and, with savage growls, he made fierce efforts to get at the man he apparently knew had fired the shot. In rapid succession Mr. Ranquist pulled the trigger four times more, but none of these balls touched a vital spot, though two of them struck the beast in the head. He was now wild with rage.

Mr. Ranquist began to reload his revolver.

"I 've only one more round — seven shots," he called.

"Hold on then!" shouted Adrian. "You can't kill him with those. If you 'll hold his attention long enough, by firing at him, I 'll shin down, and go for help. We 'll need somebody with a gun for this bear."

"Do you think you can do it?" asked Mr. Ranquist, anxiously. "I would n't want you to get hurt."

"Sure I can do it," replied Adrian, with all a boy's ability in his power to do something he has never tried before.

"I rather dislike the idea, for I 'm afraid he 'll get away from me, even if I keep firing at him, and take after you," objected Mr. Ranquist.

"I 'll chance it," was Adrian's answer. "Go ahead with loading up, and, when you 're ready I 'll scramble down. His back is toward me, when he 's under your tree."

"All right," called Mr. Ranquist, slipping in the last cartridge.

He took as careful aim as he could, and fired a shot. This time he had the luck to hit the beast on its tender snout, which so enraged and pained the bear that he did

not notice Adrian's quick movement. In order to fully cover the retreat Mr. Ranquist kept blazing away, and hit bruin twice more, though the wounds were slight. However, they served to keep the bear's attention on the man with the revolver, and Adrian slipped to the ground, edging away cautiously through the trees. When at a safe distance to prevent the noise being heard, he broke into a run.

With his last bullet gone, Mr. Ranquist settled back in the crotch of his tree. He, Mr. Dudley, and Roger made themselves as comfortable as possible, to wait until help arrived.

Meanwhile the bear went sniffing from tree to tree, getting more fierce in his rage every minute. Only the small diameter of the saplings prevented him from climbing up them. For perhaps half an hour the three were thus held prisoners, though it seemed much longer to them, all cramped as they were. Suddenly they noticed that the brute was acting strangely. He sniffed the air, and growled yet more savagely, and the hair on his back bristled up.

"I 'll bet some one is coming," said Mr. Ranquist. "I only hope they have a gun. I would n't care to meet his bearship on the ground without one, in his present frame of mind."

The next instant there was a sharp crack. The bear gave a convulsive jump, and staggered back, clawing the air with his forepaws, and growling. Then he fell over backward in a heap.

"Good !" shouted Mr. Dudley.

A little cloud of smoke floated out from behind a big chestnut tree. Next there came another rifle shot. The body of the beast shivered in a spasm, and then was very still.

"Him very much dead now. Yo' all kin come down," called a guttural voice, and Indian Johnny Green came into view, followed by Adrian.

Mr. Dudley, Mr. Ranquist and Roger lost no time in descending. They were somewhat stiff from standing in a cramped position in the tree so long, but, otherwise, and aside from the scare, no worse for the adventure.

"Well, it did n't take you long to bring help," observed Mr. Dudley, grateful to the boy, though a little while before he had been inclined to blame him.

"I happened to meet Johnny Green when I 'd gone about a mile," said Adrian. "It 's lucky he had his gun."

"It 's rather a lucky affair all around," said Mr. Ranquist.

The Indian paid no more attention to the party, but proceeded to examine his prize, for the bear rightfully belonged to him. The animal was fat and of good size, and Johnny Green was well pleased.

"I guess we 'll call this exploring expedition off for the rest of the day," suggested Mr. Ranquist. "I 'm sure we are much obliged to you boys for coming along, and especially to you, Adrian, for being brave enough to go for help when you did."

"That was nothing," answered the boy, a little abashed at the praise.

"We shall expect you to go with us some other day this week," went on the engineer. "Now, if you 'll lead the way we will go back to the hotel."

The two boys talked of nothing but the bear on the road home, but the men maintained a silence. The Indian had remained behind to look after his game. The party soon reached the inn, and, while the men went to their room Roger and Adrian hurried home to tell the news.

"Say, Roger," asked Adrian, "what made you so anxious to lead 'em on to our land by the spring?"

"Because," answered Roger, as if the matter was of no importance, "I thought they might like to get a drink. I know I did, and that 's very good water you see."

"You 're right about that," agreed Adrian, and by this time the two boys were at the house, where, in the excitement of telling his father and mother about the bear, Adrian forgot all else.

As soon as Roger could slip off without attracting notice from the folks, he made his way up the village street. Pausing before a pretty vine-covered cottage, he looked back to see that Adrian was not in sight, and then entered the gate.

"Is Professor Bailey in?" he asked, when Mrs. Bailey opened the door.

"He is," she answered.

"Tell him, please, that Adrian Kimball's cousin, Roger, would like to see him."

"Come right in," invited Mrs. Bailey. "You 'll find him in the front room."

And there, surrounded by heaps of books, Roger found the professor, Guy Bailey, principal of the Cardiff school. The boy knew him from having occasionally gone to the institution with Adrian.

"Well, Roger," began the professor, "I 'm glad to see you. Come in and sit down. Can I do anything for you ?"

"I think so," answered the boy. "I 've come for a little information." Then he plunged at once into the object of his visit.

"Professor," he asked, "do you think anybody would dig for gold in the hills around Cardiff ?"

"Bless my soul, no! What do you mean ? This is not a gold country, like California or the Klondike. What put that idea into your head ?"

"I 'll tell you a little later. Do you s'pose they would dig for coal ?"

"Hardly that, either. There is n't the kind of land black diamonds grow in around here, that is, as far as I know."

"Or iron ?"

"Scarcely iron," answered Professor Bailey, with a puzzled look at the boy. "But why do you ask me these questions ? Are you thinking of turning miner instead of farmer ?" with a smile.

"Perhaps," said Roger, and his serious air convinced the professor that the boy had some motive in his inquiries.

"You see I can't tell you all about it just now, nor why I want to know this, Professor, but I will some day. I want, most of all, to find out what, if anything, of value could be in the Cardiff hills, that would make men, or a company of capitalists, want to get possession of certain land. It might be, I suppose, coal, or iron, or gold, or something else. The question is, what is it?"

"You are asking me to go ahead pretty much in the dark," objected Professor Bailey.

"I 'm sorry, but I 'm afraid those are all the clues I can give you now," said Roger.

"Well, I 'll do my best to answer your puzzle," went on the teacher. "From what I 've read and know of the geological formation about here, I cannot think of any mineral or other deposit that would naturally be expected in this section. But of course it might be that, unknown to any one, except a certain person, there would be a valuable mine of something beneath the surface. Some mineral or quartz, but hardly coal, nor iron, nor gold."

"Perhaps it might be oil," suggested Roger.

"I 'm afraid not," was the reply, "though, as I said, almost anything is possible, but in this instance, not very probable. If you were to show me a certain spot, I might be able to say, with more certainty than I can now, whether or not a particular mineral would be apt to be present."

"I can't take you to the place," said Roger, who was determined to guard his secret well, "because I want to keep this quiet as long as I can. But, Professor, if I

brought you a sample of rocks, or minerals, or — or — something — could you tell me then?"

"Possibly I could."

"Then I'll see if I can't get some samples for you. But, please don't tell any one I was in to see you about this. Not that there's anything wrong," quickly added Roger, "but," and he advanced closer, "this may mean a good deal to some people, and I don't want to raise hopes and have them disappointed."

"Very well," answered the Professor, a little puzzled about it all, but knowing, from Roger's frank and honest face that there could be nothing but what was right. "Very well. I'll keep quiet, you may depend on it. And, when you bring me something more definite to work on, I'll help you all I can," and, with a hearty hand-shake, Professor Bailey showed Roger to the door.

"Now," said the boy to himself, as he walked slowly toward his uncle's house, "now to find out what they were digging for. I must get some of that stuff they brought up on the end of the drill. And I'll have to work quickly, for I think Mr. Ranquist suspects that I know."

CHAPTER XX

UNDERNEATH THE GROUND

For several days after the adventure with the bear Roger had no opportunity of going to the glade where the spring bubbled up, in order to find, if possible, what object the two engineers had in drilling there. Adrian was obliged to busy himself with various duties about the farm and garden, in order to get ready for the advanced spring planting, and Roger felt that he ought to help his cousin. But, all this time, Roger was busy thinking how he might accomplish his object, and get some of that mysterious substance which Mr. Dudley and Mr. Ranquist examined so eagerly.

He thought of a number of plans, but rejected them all as impracticable. Most of them would have necessitated the bringing in of some one to help him, and this he did not want to do. Even when busiest at his tasks with Adrian, his mind was continually on this one subject, and, after a few days, it seemed it would be impossible for him, with his own unaided efforts, to dig down into the earth and find what was beneath the surface. But Roger was not a boy who gave a thing up because it was difficult.

One night, after a somewhat hard day in the garden, during which the boys had set out a lot of cabbage plants,

and hoed the early beans, they were sitting in the parlor, Adrian showing Roger some books. One was a sea story, and there was a picture of a sailor heaving the log, in the old-fashioned way. Roger glanced at the reading matter, which told how, on board ship, the lead was sounded, and how the speed of the ship, as well as the depth of the water through which she was sailing, was ascertained.

The tale went on to relate how sometimes, the sailors used a piece of lead, with a hollow scooped in the lower end, into which space they would place some tallow. Then they would throw the weighted line overboard, and when the lead struck bottom, some of the mud and shells, of which the ocean bed is composed, would adhere to the grease in the hollow, scooped-out place. When the sinker was hauled to the surface and examined, experienced seamen could tell what sort of an anchorage they might find.

Roger started when he read this. He glanced over it again, carefully, and his heart beat suddenly, at the idea which came to him. His cheeks burned red with the happy thought, and he was almost afraid that Adrian would see his excitement, and question him. He made an excuse to go to his room, and busied himself there some time before he blew out his light and went to bed.

He dreamed, that night, of climbing down into a deep, dark mine, which sparkled and glittered with the gold and diamonds lining the steep sides.

The next day Roger made a hasty breakfast. To his relief Adrian did not ask him to help with the farm work, nor did the country lad suggest, as he often did, a tramp

through the woods; and Roger was very glad, for he had a plan to put in operation.

So, as soon as Adrian had left the house, having to go on an errand to a neighbor's, Roger stepped out of the back door, and made his way slowly to the path that led up through the vineyard, and, so on, to the spring glade. His pocket bulged with a number of objects, and, though he tried not to show it, he was considerably excited. It did not take him long to reach the spot where he had hidden himself from sight the day he watched Mr. Ranquist and Mr. Dudley drill down into the earth. He was almost afraid something might have happened to the place, but a careful look, showed him nothing had been disturbed.

There was the stone, behind which he first took his position, and the log, in the protecting shadow of which he had worked his way to a spot whence he might hear better. There was the second stone, and, after a little searching about he was able to discover the stick that the men had driven into the hole in the ground. He remembered pulling this up, after they had gone, and his disappointment at not finding anything there. Now he was resolved to be more careful in his method.

He looked warily about, to see that he was unobserved, and then he slowly took up the small stake, so as not to disturb the dirt around the edges of the opening. In this he was successful, and, after a few seconds he was able to lift out the stick, and was rewarded by seeing a small circular shaft, about two inches in diameter, extending

down into the unfathomable blackness. Now Roger was soon to know whether his plan would succeed.

From his pocket he drew a long, stout fishline, at one end of which was fastened a lead weight, slightly smaller around than the hole, and having a saucer-shaped depression in one end. He made sure that the sinker was tight on the string. From a small bottle he took a little rosin and beeswax, which he had decided to use instead of the tallow that served the sailors. He could get the wax more easily, and he thought that by stiffening it with rosin, it would answer just as well. Now he was all ready to put his scheme into execution.

Lying down flat on his face, he carefully lowered the weight into the hole, keeping a strong hold of the string, so it would not pay out too fast. How anxiously did he watch the slender cord slipping down and down into the depths, the leaden messenger pulling it with a gentle force. Farther and farther it went into the black hole. What would it come to rest on? Would it fulfil its mission, and get to the bottom of the opening? Or would the line be cut by sharp rocks? Once, when it had gone a quarter of the length of the string, the lead caught on some projection. How Roger's heart beat, fearing it would go no farther. He cautiously pulled the weight up a little and let it fall gently. This served to pass it beyond the stone that probably jutted out and stopped the progress momentarily. Then it kept on going down. The boy was straining every nerve in his eagerness to see what was down there, at the bottom of that little hole.

At length, after a few minutes, during which time the line had slid through his fingers, it suddenly slackened. Was this the end of the tiny shaft, or only another catch and temporary stopping on the downward journey? The boy pressed himself closer to the ground. He raised the string and from slackness it became taut with the heft of lead. Then Roger let it fall again, and it seemed to strike solid earth, or something. The cord no longer payed out. Once, twice, three times, he tried this, raising the weight and letting it fall suddenly, so that the wax and rosin in the saucer-shaped end might catch whatever there was at the bottom of the hole, and retain it.

Then Roger began to raise the lead to the surface. He worked slowly, and more cautiously than he had in lowering it, as, if the string caught on a projection now, it would be almost impossible to pull it up without tearing off the weight, and that would mean the failure of the whole plan. It was necessary to be careful, also, in order that whatever was imbedded in the wax might not be shaken off. Hand over hand he drew the cord up, and, with a fiercely beating heart, he saw the sinker come into view. He reached for it with trembling hands. Then, in the glow of the sunlight which streamed down on him, he turned the lead so that he might behold what the wax contained.

If he expected to see glittering specks of yellow gold, he was sorely disappointed. Nor was there anything he could think represented wealth, not even pieces of some mineral which would account for the great interest Mr. Dudley and Mr. Ranquist showed in their discovery.

With eyes that were a trifle dim from a sense that he had failed, Roger gazed at the waxed end of the weight. Imbedded in the sticky surface the boy saw some white crystals, which glinted and sparkled in the sun. Only some white crystals, that might have been chipped off a light-colored rock. To Roger they meant nothing. Almost idly he brushed them into the palm of his hand and rose to his feet. This, then, was the end of his hopes. The hole in the earth meant nothing, or else had been drilled for some object he could not discover. His golden dream of hidden wealth beneath his uncle's farm, by which the mortgage could be paid, was over now.

He turned away, and was about to throw the white crystals aside, when a sound behind caused him to start. He saw, emerging from the woods, Mr. Ranquist. The engineer appeared much disturbed at the sight of the boy. He stood still a moment, and then came forward rapidly. In his hand he carried a valise, which, as he dropped it on the ground, gave forth a metallic, clanking sound. Mr. Ranquist came close to Roger, who scarcely knew what to do.

"Well," began the man, and his voice was so strange that the boy felt vaguely alarmed, "well — " and he stopped.

"How do you do, Mr. Ranquist?" said the lad, as politely as he knew how.

"Humph! What right — I mean, what are you doing here? Spying on me? If you are, I warn you, boy, you 'll be sorry for it. I have been suspicious of you, since the

other day when you offered to lead us here. Now," and the engineer spoke sternly, "what do you mean?"

"Why, Mr. Ranquist — I — er — I —"

"No nonsense, now!"

For a moment Roger was somewhat frightened. Then his natural courage came back to him, and he felt a just resentment at the tone and manner of the man.

"Mr. Ranquist," he said. "I have as much right, and more, than you have, on this property. I —"

"What have you in your hand?" interrupted the engineer, looking at the fist which Roger unconsciously had closed over the white crystals. "And what are you doing with that string and weight," as he caught sight of the fishline and sinker. "Answer me!"

Mr. Ranquist darted suddenly at Roger, exclaiming:

"You have been trying to discover the secret of the hole we drilled! Well I'll spoil that game for you, my young friend!"

With a violent spring the engineer was almost upon the boy, but Roger was too quick for him. He leaped to one side, his fist tightly clenched over the crystals, which now seemed of considerable value to him, when he saw what importance Mr. Ranquist attached to the matter. With a cry of astonishment and anger at the threatened attack, but showing no sign of fear, Roger bounded out of the glade and ran through the woods, and down the hill, with Mr. Ranquist crashing through the brush after him. The chase was on.

After the first rush and surprise Roger collected his

thoughts, and determined that Mr. Ranquist should not catch him. Or if the man outran him, he resolved he would not give up what he had without a fierce struggle. The excitement of the desperate race urged him on, and he felt he could run a mile or more. He knew he was in a better condition for sprinting than he had been in many months. So when he heard the engineer coming after him, he was almost pleased at the idea of the running contest. He believed he could win.

So he kept on, now stumbling over a low stump or a projecting root, now tripping on a fallen log, or sinking into a soft spot, but never slacking pace. The sounds made by his pursuer came more faintly to him. Presently they died away altogether, and the boy felt he could safely stop. He listened intently, but there came not a noise from the woods behind him. Mr. Ranquist had given up.

"Well," thought Roger, defiantly, "he did n't make me give him these crystals, and he did n't catch me. Now I wonder what I had better do?"

He thought over the situation for a few minutes, while he rested from the chase, and then he decided on a plan.

"I 'll bet Mr. Ranquist and Mr. Dudley will do something very soon now," he said to himself. "He thinks I have discovered his secret, and so I have, though I don't know exactly what it is. But as long as he thinks I have found him out, he 'll be likely to get possession of Uncle Bert's land. And Uncle Bert will sell it to him because he needs the money so much, and he 'll never know there 's something valuable hidden under the surface until it is

too late. I must hurry to Professor Bailey and see what he says. He ought to be able to tell what these crystals are."

With a heart that beat very hopefully Roger went down the path, and by a roundabout way to the professor's house. He did not want Mr. Kimball to see him. The boy knocked on the door, which was answered by Mrs. Bailey.

"Sorry," she said, in response to Roger's question, "but Professor Bailey is not home. He went away this morning, to be gone several weeks. Can I do anything for you?"

"No," replied Roger, and his heart sank. It would be too late, unless he could soon find out what the white crystals were, for his uncle was not likely to delay in the sale of the land on merely a boy's suspicion. What was he to do? Pondering on this problem, he left the front gate of the professor's house just as a wagon rattled up.

CHAPTER XXI

ROGER TAKES A JOURNEY

Roger was uncertain for a few minutes what to do. He heard the wagon rumbling past him, but gave no notice to the driver until the latter called out:

"Hello, young man! Want a ride?"

Then the boy saw that the man was his uncle's neighbor, Enberry Took. Up to that minute Roger had not the remotest idea of taking a ride, but for some reason he could not explain, he resolved to get into the wagon. He wanted time to think of some new plan. So he nodded in answer to Mr. Took's invitation.

"Whoa, Kate!" called Enberry to his mare, and pulled up opposite Professor Bailey's gate. Roger climbed to the seat, having first wrapped his precious crystals in a piece of paper before placing them in an inside pocket.

"G'lang!" shouted Mr. Took to Kate in a loud voice. "She 's a little deef," the driver explained, indicating his mare. "Gittin' wuss, too. Hev t' git her a ear trumpet soon, ef it keeps on. Look kinder queer, would n't it, a mare 'ith a ear trumpet?"

"I think it would," replied Roger, smiling at the idea.

"G'lang!" shouted Mr. Took again, and this time the mare started off at a slow pace.

The two rode for a few minutes in silence.

"Nice day," ventured Enberry at length.

"Fine," assented Roger.

"Goin' fer?" went on Mr. Took, flicking a fly from the mare's back.

"Why, yes — er — that is — I don't know. I mean I can't say."

"Wa'al, we 'll git at it arter a while," laughed Enberry. "Which is it?"

"Where are you going?" asked Roger, a sudden thought coming to him.

"Syracuse. Why?"

"That 's where I 'm going then."

"Humph! Made up yer mind rather suddint," commented Enberry, with a grin. "But ye 're welcome, all th' same. I won't be comin' back 'til rather late though, 'long about nine o'clock," he added.

"That will suit me good enough," said Roger. "I 'll tell you what it is," growing confidential, and knowing he could trust Mr. Took. "I want to go to Syracuse to find a chemist. I have something, and I want to find out what it is. I was going to ask Professor Bailey, but he has gone away, and I 'm in a hurry. I don't s'pose you know of a man out to the city who could tell all about minerals and such things, do you?"

"Ye say ye 've got suthin' 'n' don't know what it is?" asked Mr. Took, with rather a puzzled look on his face.

Roger nodded.

"Then I know th' very place fer ye," said Enberry,

suddenly. "Perfessor Bootsky 's th' man fer ye. He 's a fortune teller. That 's what ye want. He 'll reveal th' past, present, 'n' future. I went t' him onct. Told me I 'd hev bad luck inside of a month, 'n' I 'll be gol-swizzled ef one a' my cows did n't up 'n' die on me. He 's th' chap fer ye. Tell ye anythin' 'bout nothin' 'n' nothin' 'bout everythin', jest 's ye like. I 'll take ye t' him. G'lang, Kate!" and fired with sudden energy and enthusiasm, Mr. Took sent the mare along at a flying pace.

"No! No!" exclaimed Roger, trying not to laugh.

"No?" with a puzzled air, from Enberry.

"I have something I want analyzed, to find out what sort of stuff it is," said Roger.

"Hain't nobody been tryin' t' pizen ye, hev they?" asked Enberry, with a startled look. "I read 'bout a case like thet in th' papers onct. Feller most died from drinkin' well water. Had a green scum on it. Took it t' a perfessor, 'n' what d' he s'pose he said?"

"What?"

"Paris Green! G'lang, Kate!"

"Oh, this is nothing like that," said Roger. "At least I do not believe what I have is poison."

"And you want jest a ordinary chemist 'n' not a fortune teller, eh?"

"I do."

"Wa'al," said Mr. Took, at length, "ye come t' th' right place fere information fer onct in yer life, Roger. I know jest th' feller ye want. He used t' live out here 'fore he growed up, got a eddercation, 'n' become one a'

them chaps what looks through a glass, 'n' tells ye 'bout bugs in th' drinkin' water, 'n' wigglers turnin inter musquiters. 'N' he looks through a thing like a telescope, 'n' tells ye 'bout lines, 'n' angles, 'n' feet, 'n' chains, 'n' links, 'n' so on. What d' ye call them fellers?"

"Surveyors," ventured Roger.

"That 's it. He 's a surveyor. Addison Vanter is his name. He 's one of 'em employed by the city, 'n' his office is in th' town hall. I 'll take ye right t' him; I know him, 'n' he 'll fix ye up. G'lang, Kate!"

"I did n't tell the folks I was coming away," said Roger, "so I hope we 'll be back before very late. I would n't like them to be worried on my account."

"We 'll git back all right," answered Mr. Took. "'Long 'bout haf-past eight er nine o'clock. Bert's folks won't miss ye 'til then, 'specially as boys is allers traipsin' off sommers er other."

"I guess nine o'clock will not be too late," said Roger. "Would you mind, Mr. Took," the boy went on, "not speaking about this trip to people in Cardiff? You see I want to surprise my uncle, and I don't want him to know anything about what I am doing. There 's nothing wrong in it, though."

Mr. Took promised readily enough, as he knew he could trust the boy, and he did not ask any questions, for which Roger was grateful. They were well on their journey now, driving along the pleasant valley road in the sunshine. It yet lacked considerable of noon, but Roger began to feel hungry, for, in the excitement, he had

not eaten much breakfast. Mr. Took seemed to know this, and with a good-natured smile, he reached under the seat and pulled out a pail.

"My wife allers puts this snack up fer me when I go t' th' city," he said. "Here, help yerself," and he extended the pail filled with crisp, brown doughnuts and some cream cheese. Roger did full justice to Mrs. Took's excellent cooking, and, when he had finished the fifth cake he felt much better. Nor had Mr. Took been a whit behind him in disposing of the toothsome fried cakes.

"They 're fine," was Roger's verdict.

"Allers make me thirsty," commented Mr. Took, "but I know where I kin git a drink."

He shook the reins, and Kate trotted on.

"Whoa up!" shouted Enberry, suddenly pulling the mare in. "Here we be."

Beside the road was a hollowed-out tree trunk, moss lined, filled to the edges and running over with clear, cool, sparkling water, that flowed and bubbled into the trough from a wooden pipe, made from a hollow log, which extended back to the spring. There was a dried yellow gourd for a dipper, and Mr. Took and Roger drank their fill, while Kate stuck her nose deep into the liquid, and sucked it up with queer little noises.

"Finest water in th' state," said Mr. Took, wiping his mouth dry on the back of his hand, "finest water in th' state."

And Roger agreed with him.

"Wa'al, we 'll git along I guess," said Enberry, after

a pause, and they made no other stop until they reached Syracuse. Mr. Took drove under the sheds back of the Candee House, where the Cardiff stage put up. This lumbering vehicle had arrived a few minutes before them.

"Not so bad," said Mr. Took, glancing at his big silver watch. "It 's one o'clock. Now we 'll git some dinner. Hello, Porter!" he called to the stage driver, who just then emerged from the barn. "How be ye? Most got in ahead on ye, did n't I?"

"Had t' make a few extra stops," explained Mr. Amidown. "Made me a leetle late," and, with a nod, he passed on.

Now Roger was almost as hungry as if he had not eaten the doughnuts, and he wanted his dinner very much. But he knew hotels charged for food, even if it was for a small boy, and he realized, for the first time, that, in his hurry he had come away without any money. So he began to wonder how he could pay for a meal, or even a half of one, providing they had that kind. He did not like to go in with Mr. Took, under the circumstances, so he rather hung back, when his friend followed the stage driver into the public parlor of the Candee House. But Enberry was quick to notice the boy's diffidence, and, rightly guessing the cause, he said:

"I 'm standin' treat t'-day, Porter. You 'n' Roger here, is invited t' dine at my expense. 'T ain't often I git a chanst t' hev company at my hotel, 'n' when I do I make th' most on it. Now, now," as he saw Roger

hesitating, "no excuses, jest come right along. I 've got lots t' do, 'n' no time t' stand on ceremony. 'Sides, I 'm 's hungry 's a b'ar 'n' her four cubs."

So there was nothing to do but accept the invitation, and soon all three were sitting down to a plain, but bountifully spread table.

"I 'll take ye t' thet feller I spoke about, Roger," said Mr. Took, as he began on his second piece of pie. "Then I 'll hev t' leave ye. Be back here by six o'clock, 's I 'll start then. Can't do my tradin' much afore thet. That 'll give us a chanst t' git a bite a' supper, 'n' we kin be in Cardiff by nine o'clock. Th' moon 's full, 'n' it 'll be good drivin'."

"He kin go back 'ith me, 'bout three o'clock," spoke up Mr. Amidown. "I 'd like t' hev him on th' stage."

Roger thanked his friend for the offer, but said he was not sure he could be through with what he had to do in that short time, and so he decided to stick to his original plan and go back with Mr. Took. It would be more fun, too, he thought, driving home by moonlight. The dinner was soon over, and, when Mr. Took had paid the bill, he and Roger walked up the main street of Syracuse.

They made their way to the city hall, and Enberry soon located his acquaintance. Mr. Vanter was glad to see some one from Cardiff, especially Mr. Took, with whom he was quite friendly. Roger was introduced.

"He 's a N' York city boy, out on a visit to his uncle, a neighbor a' mine," explained Enberry. "He has a

notion he wants t' see ye 'bout suthin', jest what, I don't know, but he 'll tell ye. Now I 've got t' go. Remember, Roger, be at th' Candee House by six o'clock."

"I will," replied the boy, as Mr. Took left.

"Now, my young friend, what can I do for you?" asked Mr. Vanter, pleasantly.

Roger pulled from his pocket the paper containing the mysterious white crystals. He held them toward the surveyor.

"What are they?" the boy asked.

Mr. Vanter took them in his hand. He smelled of them, once, twice. Then, taking a tiny piece of one of the particles he touched it on the tip of his tongue. He made a wry face.

"Humph!" he remarked, and tasted again. "It must be," he muttered to himself, as Roger looked anxiously on. Then the chemist got a test tube, put some of the crystals in it, and poured a little water on them. He shook the glass violently, until the white particles had all dissolved. Then he brought out several bottles of chemicals, and began his tests. Roger was much interested, and, at the conclusion of the experimenting, when Mr. Vanter put his materials aside, the boy leaned forward, and asked breathlessly :

"What is it?"

"You have here," said Mr. Vanter, smiling a little, "a very fine sample of — pure rock salt."

"Salt?"

Roger's heart went away down into his shoes. Why,

he thought, should Mr. Ranquist and Mr. Dudley have been so elated over a little salt.

"Just ordinary salt, though a very fine grade," repeated the surveyor.

"Only salt," and there was a world of disappointment in Roger's tone.

"But salt is not to be despised, by any means," went on Mr. Vanter. "If it was n't for the salt wells, Syracuse would not be such a fine city as it is. Besides, if there was no salt, the people of the whole world would be very badly off. Is there something behind all this, Roger? Perhaps if you tell me I may be able to help you more than I can now. As it is I am working in the dark."

"Then I 'll tell you everything," said Roger, and he did so, from the arrival of the two strangers in Cardiff, and his suspicions of them, the manner in which he had discovered them drilling the hole, how they sought to keep him away from the spring glade, and, finally, his escape from Mr. Ranquist that morning, ending with his journey to Syracuse.

"Hum," remarked Mr. Vanter at length. "Hum." He pursed up his lips, and wrinkled his forehead in deep thought as he paced rapidly back and forth in his office. Then he clapped his hands together with a resounding whack, and cried aloud :

"That 's it! By the Great Horn Spoon, but that 's it ! No wonder they want to keep it secret."

"What?" asked Roger, Mr. Vanter's excitement infecting him. "What is it ?"

"Well," began the surveyor, cautiously, "I would n't want to raise any false hopes, but, Roger, my boy, I think you have stumbled across a big discovery, or, rather, you have probably done so at the same time these two men did. And it 's a mighty good thing for you and your uncle. You say he is greatly in need of money to pay off this mortgage. Does Mr. Ranquist or Mr. Dudley know about that ?"

"I 'm afraid they do," said Roger, thinking of how Adrian had incautiously told something of his father's affairs to the engineers that day.

"That 's bad, that 's bad," went on Mr. Vanter, half to himself. "Now, since they know you are on the track of their secret, they 'll act promptly. Every minute is valuable. They may get your uncle to sign an agreement to-day promising to sell his land to them, and if he does so, it 's as binding as if he deeded it away, if they choose to make him fulfil the contract, as, no doubt, they would do. If I had only known of this yesterday. But perhaps we can catch them yet." He looked quickly at his watch.

"But what 's it all about ?" asked Roger, who did not yet understand what made Mr. Vanter so excited, all over a little salt.

"It 's this," replied the surveyor. "Unless I 'm very much mistaken, those men have discovered on your uncle's farm a valuable deposit of rock salt. Of its extent and worth I can only guess, but, from the actions of Mr. Ranquist, the mine must be a rich one. His object will be to secure Mr. Kimball's land, or that part of it in

the spring-glade, before the fact becomes known that there is salt under the surface. Thus he can obtain, for the price of ordinary farming real estate, property that may be worth thousands and thousands of dollars."

Roger felt his breath come with a gasp.

"And it's our business to prevent this," said Mr. Vanter. "Now," he went on, "I'll tell you what we'll do."

He seemed to be thinking out a plan, and Roger waited, all impatience.

"You take the stage back to Cardiff," continued the surveyor. "I'll come on after you with Mr. Took, and that will give me time to make some arrangements here. Now be careful what you do. Don't tell any one you have seen me, and, when I arrive in Cardiff, don't recognize me if you meet me in the road. Above all, hurry. You have only just time to catch the stage. When you get home, say to your uncle the first thing: 'Don't sign any papers to sell the spring-glade land for at least a week.' If he wants to know why, tell him, and say you have seen me. But, if he has n't signed, don't let him. Now hurry, and good luck go with you."

With wildly beating heart, thinking of what might happen in the next few hours, Roger made his way to the Candee House, where he found the stage just pulling out.

"Hi there! Mr. Amidown! Please take me along!" shouted the boy.

"Oh! Eh! Changed yer mind, did ye?" said Porter,

as he pulled up his team and helped Roger to climb on the high seat. "Wa'al, I 'm glad t' hev ye come along. I did n't hev no one t' ride 'ith me. Nothin' but a lot a' weemin passengers this trip. G'lang, Pete 'n' Jim," and he flicked the horses lightly.

Roger thought the ride to Cardiff would never come to an end. But, at last, he came in sight of the white church. He jumped off the stage at the post-office, and ran all the way to his uncle's house. He burst into the kitchen, where he saw Mr. Kimball looking at a paper.

"Fer th' land sakes," burst out Mrs. Kimball, "we thought a b'ar had carried ye off, Roger."

"Uncle Bert!" cried the boy, earnestly, "don't sign any papers, agreeing to sell the land near the spring!"

Mr. Kimball gazed slowly over the rims of his spectacles at his nephew.

"Wa'al," he began slowly, "I did n't know 's ye knew anythin' 'bout this transaction, but ye 're a leetle too late. I signed an hour ago. Mr. Ranquist brought th' agreement t' me, 'n' I must say I think I got a good price. Enough t' pay off th' mortgage, 'n' a leetle over."

"Then you have signed?" spoke the boy, waiting in fear for the answer.

"I hev."

"I 'm too late," exclaimed Roger, bitterly. "They got ahead of me, after all."

CHAPTER XXII

A QUESTION OF LAW

THE sudden entrance of Roger, his words and manner, and his earnestness, created no small excitement in the Kimball household. Adrian and Clara, who had been in the sitting-room, discussing the situation, and rejoicing over the sale of the land, by means of which the mortgage could be paid, came hurrying into the kitchen as they heard their cousin speak.

"Hello, Roger!" exclaimed Adrian. "I was just going out to hunt you up. Where were you?"

"Out to Syracuse," answered Roger, briefly.

Mr. Kimball folded up the agreement of sale he had been reading, and came over to where his nephew stood.

"Roger, my boy," he began, "what do ye mean? What is all this about, anyhow? Ain't I got a right t' sell my land ef I want t'? 'N' ain't two thousand dollars a good price fer th' spring-glade?"

"No, sir! It is not!" burst out the boy. "That 's just it. You 've gone and bargained away land worth probably twenty times what you have agreed to sell it for."

"What 's that? I guess ye don't know what ye 're talkin' about, Roger."

"I guess I do," said Roger, stoutly, but not forgetting the deference due his uncle. "Look here!" and he held out a few of the white crystals.

"What 's them?" asked Mr. Kimball.

"Rock salt."

"Rock salt. Wa'al, what of it? There 's lots of it, out t' Syracuse."

"And there 's lots of it on that land you 've agreed to sell," exclaimed Roger. "That 's what I went to the city for. That 's what I 've been following Mr. Ranquist and Mr. Dudley for. Uncle Bert, your farm, or part of it, anyhow, is right over a salt mine. I know this, though I can't say how big the mine is. But a man who knows something about such things believes it will be worth lots of money. That 's why I tried to hurry home, to prevent you from signing the property away."

"Oh! Why did n't ye wait, Bert?" said Mrs. Kimball, in a sorrowful voice.

"Wa'al," spoke Mr. Kimball, in rather a husky tone, "I s'pose I ought t' hev, but how 'd I know there was salt on my land? There ain't never been no evidences of it. How d' ye know there is?" turning suddenly to Roger.

"Because," answered the boy, earnestly, "I saw Mr. Ranquist and Mr. Dudley drilling a hole near the spring. I saw them pull up something on the end of a rod, from deep down under the earth. This morning I lowered a weight on a string down the hole, and these white crystals stuck to the wax on the end of the lead. Mr. Ranquist saw me, and he chased me, but I beat him running. Then I

went to a man in Syracuse. Enberry Took gave me a ride out. The man told me what this stuff was, and wanted me to warn you not to agree to sell."

Then Roger related the whole story to his uncle and the rest of the family, just as he had told Mr. Vanter. When he had finished a silence fell on the little group in the farmhouse kitchen.

"Humph!" ejaculated Mr. Kimball, at length. "I guess th' boy 's right. I wonder I did n't smell a rat when this feller Ranquist come so hot arter my land, when there 's plenty other t' be hed in Cardiff. I never suspicioned nothin'. He offered me one thousand dollars, 'n' I says make it two thousand, so 's I could pay off th' mortgage."

"Did he do it?" asked Roger.

"Never hesitated a minute," went on Mr. Kimball. "Agreed to it right away. 'N' then he hed me go up t' Squire Bimmer's office, 'n' sign th' agreement. Paid me five hundred dollars down," and Mr. Kimball drew out a crisp bank-note, and gazed rather sorrowfully at it. "He said he 'd pay th' balance 's soon 's we could draw th' deed, t'-morrow er next day, but he said th' agreement were 's bindin' 's ef he hed a deed."

"I guess it is," said Roger, remembering what Mr. Vanter had told him.

"Plowshares 'n' hoe handles, but why did n't I wait!" lamented Mr. Kimball. "Though how in th' name a' th' sacred cat was I t' know there were salt on th' land. My! My! But I guess I 've made a bad mistake."

So, instead of being glad because the land was sold, Mr. Kimball, and all the family, were greatly downcast after they had listened to Roger's story. And he, too, took very much to heart the disappointment of his uncle. If he had only acted a day sooner, all this trouble would have been avoided. But it was too late for regrets now, and the only thing to do, was to make the best of it, the boy thought. Yet it was very hard to see valuable land sold for such a small sum, particularly when his uncle needed money so badly. There was just a faint hope in Roger's heart, that perhaps Mr. Vanter might be able to suggest a way out of the difficulty. But the hope was so faint that he hardly dared speak of it. He could only wait until the promised arrival of the surveyor, and see what would come of it.

Troubled dreams disturbed the usually quiet slumbers of more than one member of the Kimball home that night. Roger's uncle was so restless, tossing to and fro on the bed, and thinking of his lost opportunity, that he was glad when morning came, so he could get up and go to work. The others, also, thought too much of what had happened to sleep well.

After the chores were done up Mr. Kimball paid a visit to the spring glade. To his eyes, not experienced in looking for signs of mineral wealth, there were no indications of a salt mine beneath the surface, and he felt himself almost wishing such a thing could not be true. But he could scarcely doubt it, after what had occurred. With a heavy heart he took up the duties of the day.

"Come on, Roger," called Adrian, as soon as he had done his part of the morning's work about the farm, "let 's go up by the spring, and see where the salt mine is. Cracky! I wish I 'd been along when you went fishing on dry land. I 'll bet I 'd fired a stone at Ranquist."

"I wish you had been along," said Roger. "Your father would not have signed then. But I thought I was acting for the best."

"Of course you did. It is n't your fault," replied Adrian.

The two boys walked up the hill, and were soon at the place. On the way Roger was wondering whether Mr. Vanter had come out. He remembered his instructions, to pretend not to recognize the surveyor. As the lads approached the spring they could hear through the trees, the noise of men digging, and voices in conversation. The click of spades and shovels was plainly audible.

"They 're at it already !" exclaimed Adrian. "Hurry up, and let 's see 'em get the salt out."

"I guess they won't reach it very soon," said Roger. "It 's about twenty-five feet under the surface."

The boys quickened their steps, and soon came to the open glade. Three men were busy at work, two of them laborers, while the third was a familiar figure to Roger, who gave a start of surprise as he recognized Mr. Vanter directing operations. But even in the intense excitement of the moment, Roger did not forget his promise, and he was prepared to show by no sign that he had ever seen the surveyor before.

"Why, there 's a new man," said Adrian, as he caught sight of Mr. Vanter. "I thought, at first, it was Mr. Dudley or Mr. Ranquist, but it is n't. I wonder who he is. Anyhow, let 's see what they are doing."

The cousins watched the laborers with great interest. Mr. Vanter glanced up and saw Roger, but, though he gave just the faintest smile, to show he knew his young friend, he made no motion to indicate that the order of last night was not to be obeyed, so Roger kept silent.

The two laborers were digging a sort of inclined shaft, sinking it about the place where Mr. Ranquist had drilled the small hole. Their picks and shovels made the brown dirt fly, and Mr. Vanter urged them on, as though they were working against time. The boys watched for perhaps ten minutes, when there came a sound, as if some one was approaching. The next instant Mr. Dudley and Mr. Ranquist appeared on the scene. Roger started in surprise, wondering what would happen now, but Mr. Vanter gave no indication that he saw the engineers, and the laborers kept on digging.

"Well," said Mr. Ranquist, at length, "I must say I consider this a rather high-handed proceeding. By what right, sir, are you working on my property? Do you know," addressing Mr. Vanter, "that you and your men are trespassing, and are liable to arrest?"

"Since when have you owned this land?" asked the surveyor, coolly. "This belongs to Bert Kimball, a friend of mine, and —"

"It does n't belong to him any more," broke in Mr. Ranquist.

"Since when has he ceased to own it?"

"Well, I don't know as that is any of your affair, but I 'll tell you. Since yesterday afternoon Mr. Kimball ceased to be the owner, when he signed an agreement to sell this piece to the Universal Salt Company."

Mr. Vanter started, and looked at Roger, who sorrowfully nodded in confirmation of what the engineer had said.

"There 's his son; ask him," went on Mr. Ranquist, pointing to Adrian.

"I guess it 's true," said the boy, in response to Mr. Vanter's look. "But," he added, "my father would never have agreed to sell it if he had known there was salt on it."

"I would imagine not," said Mr. Vanter, softly, to himself.

"That was his lookout, not mine," came from Mr. Ranquist. Turning to Mr. Vanter, he added: "I advise you to leave here, my friend. I 'll overlook the trespass for once, but don't let it happen again," and he frowned in a significant manner.

"Suppose I refuse to go until you prove to me that you own this land, or have a legal right, by virtue of an agreement, to order me off," asked Mr. Vanter.

"Then I 'm afraid there 'll be an unpleasant scene," exclaimed Mr. Ranquist, in a harsh voice, and with a sudden motion he drew a revolver, and aimed it full at

the surveyor. "I don't want to resort to forceful measures," he went on, "but I 'll have no hesitation in using this if you remain here three minutes longer." He drew out his watch.

"You need n't worry," spoke up Mr. Vanter, calmly. "I 'm not afraid of that popgun, for I 've faced bigger ones than that, but at present you seem to have the law on your side. However, Mr. Ranquist, we may meet again, when perhaps the shoe will be on the other foot. I 'll bid you good-morning," and, bowing politely, with not a trace of anger in his face, Mr. Vanter walked slowly down the hill, followed by the two laborers. Roger and Adrian remained behind for a minute or so.

"I guess I can get along without you two boys," remarked Mr. Ranquist, in strange contrast to his pleasant tones of a few days before. "And as for you, Master Roger, if I catch you on this land after to-day, it won't be well for you. Mind what I say, and keep off. I 'll see your father, Adrian, and have him keep you away also."

"You need n't trouble yourself," said Adrian, quickly. He was as angry as ever a boy could be. "We don't have any great hankering to get on your land, which you had to cheat to get control of," and with this parting shot Adrian and Roger made their way in the direction taken by Mr. Vanter. They caught up to him before he had gone very far, and though Roger, in obedience to his instructions, was not going to speak, the surveyor addressed him.

"Well, Roger," he said, "I see you were too late. Your uncle must have signed before you got home last night."

"He had," answered the boy. "He was reading the agreement when I got in. I think he said he is to sign the deed to-morrow."

"Too bad," remarked Mr. Vanter, sympathetically, "but I suppose it could n't be helped. I think I 'll go down and see Mr. Kimball, anyhow. He used to know me when I was a Cardiff boy. I suppose," turning to Adrian, "this is his son?"

Adrian nodded pleasantly, and while the party advanced Roger told his cousin in a low tone who Mr. Vanter was, and how he had met him. At the foot of the hill the surveyor dismissed his laborers and went on with the boys.

"I did n't have a chance to do much in the way of examining the land," said Mr. Vanter to Roger. "I would have dug deeper if I had n't been interrupted. But from what I saw, and the way Ranquist acted, I am pretty sure the salt deposit is a large one, and valuable. I wish, for Mr. Kimball's sake, I had known this two days ago."

When the three reached the house, they found Mr. Kimball reading a letter. Roger introduced Mr. Vanter, and the farmer at once recalled the man who, as a youngster, used to play about the village streets.

"I ain't forgot ye," he said, clapping Mr. Vanter heartily on the back. "I remember onct when I ketched

ye in my melon patch," and he laughed at the recollection, Mr. Vanter joining in.

"I have even better cause than you have not to forget that little incident," responded the surveyor, as he rubbed the back of his legs reflectively.

"I reckon I switched ye good 'n' proper," commented Mr. Kimball, a smile playing about the corners of his mouth.

"I hear you have been selling a salt mine just as if it was ordinary pasture land," said Mr. Vanter, to change the subject.

"Why, how 'd ye know thet?" asked Mr. Kimball, in a wondering tone. "I calalated nobody — Oh! You 're th' feller Roger went to see in Syracuse," he cried suddenly. "I understand now. Wa'al, it ain't th' boy's fault. He made a noble try. I took up Ranquist's offer too quick, thet 's th' hull trouble. But I needed th' money bad. In fact, here 's a letter now, tellin' me thet onless I raise th' cash by th' end a' th' week, th' mortgage 'll be foreclosed, 'n' I 'll lose th' farm. By sellin' th' springglade when I did, I 've got nuff t' make th' payment. Ha'f a loaf 's better 'n' no bread, ye know. But I s'pose I ought t' hev waited."

"When do you sign the deed?" asked Mr. Vanter. "I understand you have given a binding agreement to sell, so it 's no use trying to get out of that."

"Why, me 'n' Mrs. Kimball are t' put our signatures on th' deed t'-morrow," replied the farmer, "'n' I git th' balance a' th' two thousand dollars then. Handy 'nuff

it 'll be, too, but I wish now it were more. I 'll be pretty heavily in debt, even arter I pay off th' mortgage. Yes, sir, me 'n' mother here signs t'-morrow," and he motioned to his wife who had come to the door.

At the mention of Mrs. Kimball's name in connection with signing the deed, Mr. Vanter gave a start of surprise. He seemed to have an idea that proved a pleasant thought, for he rubbed his hands together, and began pacing up and down the room, as he had done when Roger saw him the first time, in the Syracuse office.

"Tell me," said Mr. Vanter, coming toward Mr. Kimball, and speaking very earnestly, "did Mrs. Kimball sign the agreement?"

"Why, no, she did n't, come t' think on 't," replied the farmer, scratching his head. "She were out when Mr. Ranquist brought th' paper. I guess she 'd gone over t' Mrs. Took's. It were only a matter a' form, havin' her sign, Ranquist said, 'n' he mentioned she could sign th' deed. 'N' so, he bein' in a hurry, he left 'fore she got back. So th' agreement 's got only my name on 't."

"If you don't mind, I 'd like to take a look at that agreement," said Mr. Vanter, smiling as though something pleased him.

"Wa'al, I guess ye kin hev it," remarked Mr. Kimball. "'Tain't much use t' me, seein' 's how Ranquist has a copy. But what in th' name a' th' Cardiff giant d 'ye want it fer?"

"To keep Mrs. Kimball from signing it by mistake," replied Mr. Vanter.

"How 's thet? Is there any hope thet I won't hev t' deed away thet land?" asked Mr. Kimball, in great excitement.

"Oh, no; I guess you 'll have t' sign the deed, as you have agreed to," was the answer.

"What then?"

"Well," said the surveyor slowly, "I may think of a plan to outwit Mr. Ranquist yet. Put on your hat and coat, and we 'll go to Squire Bimmer's office."

"Hurrah!" shouted Roger, gaily, as he saw his uncle and Mr. Vanter leave the house. "Hurrah! Maybe it will come out right after all!"

But Mrs. Kimball, who had heard the talk, did not see how, and she was in no happy frame of mind, over the prospect of selling the valuable land for such a small sum.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE PLOTTERS FOILED

The news of salt being discovered on Mr. Kimball's farm soon became known all over Cardiff. People rubbed their eyes, and wondered if something of the kind would n't happen on their land. Several began to dig in their gardens and back-yards, others on their hillsides, while a number hurried to the spring-glade to see what a salt mine looked like. These persons were much disappointed, however, as the only thing they saw was what digging Mr. Vanter's men had done. Mr. Ranquist was on guard, also, and warned all curious ones away.

The deed was to be signed at ten o'clock the next day, and, from the time Mr. Vanter took Mr. Kimball off with him, until that night, the two spent many busy hours. There was much looking over of legal books and records, and a number of consultations in Squire Bimmer's office. Toward the close of the day, that had been so full of exciting incidents, Mr. Kimball seemed a little more cheerful.

"I think," said Mr. Vanter, as he and the farmer left the squire's house, "that we 'll have a little surprise for Mr. Ranquist to-morrow."

"I 'm sure I hope it 'll come out right," remarked Mr. Kimball.

Mr. Vanter started off toward the Pine Tree Inn.

"Whar ye goin'?" demanded Mr. Kimball.

"Why I thought I 'd put up at the tavern, just as I did last night," rejoined Mr. Vanter.

"Not much, ye won't," interposed Mr. Kimball. "I ain't goin' t' hev a friend a' mine eatin' th' kind a fodder ye 'll find up at th' Pine Tree. Ye 're comin' home 'ith me. I guess we 'll be able t' give ye suthin' t' eat, 'n' a place t' sleep."

"Well, if you insist," agreed Mr. Vanter, to whom the prospect of another night in the tavern, under the same roof with Mr. Ranquist and Mr. Dudley, was not a pleasant one. So he and Mr. Kimball went back to the big, comfortable farmhouse, where a smoking-hot supper was waiting for them. And Mr. Vanter did full justice to the tender chicken, fried crisp in sweet butter, the salt-rising bread, the buckwheat honey, the preserved plums, the generously frosted fruit and chocolate cakes, and a lot besides.

"It 's the best meal I 've had in a year," he told the delighted Mrs. Kimball, while Clara blushed at the praise bestowed on her cakes.

Every one was up early next morning, and, soon after breakfast, Squire Bimmer came along, bearing his seal as Commissioner of Deeds, his law books, and various legal papers.

"I don't calalate I 'll hev much need a' this," said the squire, indicating his seal.

"I hope not," replied Mr. Vanter. "But we can't tell. It all depends on Mrs. Kimball," and he smiled a little as he said this.

"Wa'al I guess I kin make out t' act jest 's ye told me to," remarked that lady. "Ye need n't be afraid a' me goin' back on ye."

"No danger," chuckled Mr. Kimball.

It was about ten o'clock, when Mr. Ranquist, accompanied by Mr. Dudley and a lawyer, appeared at the farmhouse. They were led into the parlor, a table was cleared, and Mr. Vanter, Mr. Kimball, and Squire Bimmer drew up close to it. Mr. Ranquist glared at Mr. Vanter, and smiled in an easy sort of fashion, as though he already had the property in his possession. He slowly drew from his valise a bundle of bank-bills.

"There 's fifteen hundred dollars in that package," he said, addressing no one in particular.

"I suppose everything is in readiness," said Mr. Dudley to his lawyer. "Here is the agreement Mr. Kimball has signed. All that is necessary now is for him to put his name on the deed."

"'N' I 'm ready to do thet," spoke up the farmer. Roger and Adrian, who had entered the room, wondered at his easy compliance. They had expected him to refuse, and looked to see Mr. Ranquist compel him, by means of the agreement. Pens and ink were ready, and, in a few seconds Mr. Kimball had affixed his signature to the deed, by the terms of which he conveyed a certain tract of land, described very carefully, to the Universal Salt

Company, to have and to hold, and so on, with a lot of legal terms.

"Now," remarked the lawyer for the two engineers, when he had blotted Mr. Kimball's name, "as soon as Mrs. Kimball has signed you will get the fifteen hundred dollars."

"Oh, yes, ye want Mrs. Kimball now," said her husband, smiling a bit, and not at all like a man who has been cheated into selling a valuable salt mine for a small sum. "Oh, yes, Mrs. Kimball. Wait; I'll call her. Here, mother," he said, going to the door, "come in. We need ye fer a minute."

Mrs. Kimball entered as her husband went out. She was a little excited over the part she was to play.

"Sign right there, please," said the lawyer, pointing to the space below Mr. Kimball's name, and seeing to it, as the law requires, that the husband was not present when the wife signed the deed.

Mrs. Kimball did not seem to understand. She made no motion to pick up the pen. The lawyer waited expectantly, and then said:

"Just sign your name, will you, please?"

"No, sir," replied Mrs. Kimball, firmly, "I won't sign. I've made up my mind not to put my name to this deed, 'n' I ain't agoin' to."

"What?" exclaimed the lawyer.

"What?" cried Mr. Ranquist.

"What?" almost shouted Mr. Dudley.

Then all three said, "What!" in a chorus.

"No, sir!" repeated Mrs. Kimball, "I 'm not agoin' t' sign, 'n' thet 's th' end on 't," and she shut her lips firmly.

"Why this is ridiculous. I never heard of such a thing," began the lawyer. "Why, my dear Mrs. Kimball, your husband can't convey this property unless you sign the deed also. That is the law. Husband and wife must both sign the deed. This puts us in a pretty predicament!"

"I thought it would," said Mr. Vanter, softly; and at the words, Mr. Ranquist turned angrily toward him.

"Oh, so you 've been meddling," the engineer remarked, with a sneer.

"If you call it that," rejoined Mr. Vanter coolly.

"Can't you induce your wife to sign?" asked the lawyer of Mr. Kimball.

The grizzled farmer, who had returned, smiled good naturedly.

"I don't like t' be disobligin'," he said, slowly, "but from long experience I know thet whenever Mrs. Kimball makes up her mind not t' do a thing, she won't do it. I 've tried her before, 'n' I know. Ef she says she won't sign, there 's no use a' me, er any one else tryin' t' make her," and Mr. Kimball sat down.

"And I suppose I hardly need point out," interposed Mr. Vanter, "that, without the consent of Mrs. Kimball her husband cannot legally sell that property. I rather guess the Universal Salt Company will have to get along without the spring-glade, Mr. Ranquist. What do you think of the situation now?"

Mr. Ranquist, without replying, turned angrily to his lawyer.

"I 'm afraid he 's right," assented the legal representative of the foiled plotters. "The law requires the unenforced consent of the wife if the husband sells any of his property. This is a woman's dower right, and amounts to a third interest in her husband's real estate. We can't get this land unless Mrs. Kimball signs the deed, and she — "

"She 's not goin' t' sign, 'n' ye need n't try t' make her," interrupted that lady. "I guess that 'll put a spoke in yer wheel," she added as she swept out of the room.

"I rather think th' deal 's off, gentlemen," said Mr. Kimball as he laid a five hundred dollar bill with the other money. "I 'm sorry, but it can't be helped. Curi's how obstinate some womenfolks be," and he chuckled loudly. "That 's yer money back."

For a little while Mr. Ranquist looked very angry and disappointed.

"I think you are all making a mistake," he said. "We made a fair bargain for the land, and gave you just what you asked. There may be salt on it, and, then, there may not be. If there is, it may not be that there will be enough to make it pay. But we are willing to take the risk. However, if you think you should have more money, why perhaps five hundred dollars additional — "

Mr. Kimball made a gesture of dissent.

"Or say one thousand more," said Mr. Ranquist, eagerly.

"I reckon we won't do any tradin' t'-day," broke in Mr.

Kimball. "I calalate I 'll farm thet salt mine myself. I guess I kin make out t' dig 'nuff t' make it pay."

"All right, suit yourself," came from Mr. Ranquist, as if he was ready to give up. He turned to the lawyer, who handed him a paper.

"I 'm sorry," said the engineer, and his lips showed a cruel smile, that indicated just the opposite feeling, "I 'm sorry, but I 'm afraid I 'll be obliged to ask Mr. Kimball to pay off this mortgage. It is some time overdue, and has been assigned to us. I presume you have the money handy, Mr. Kimball, otherwise we shall at once begin action to foreclose, and take the farm from you. In the meantime we shall, as a matter of precaution, retain control of that part of the land known as the spring-glade."

"Wh — What?" stammered poor Mr. Kimball, for the demand of Mr. Ranquist came like a stab in the back. "Why — why, I thought — "

"Never mind what you thought," interrupted Mr. Ranquist. "The question is, have you the cash to pay off this mortgage with?" and his tone held a threat.

"N-no, sir — I can't say — wa'al, I ain't got it, 'n' thet 's th' — "

"Oh, yes, he has it all right," broke in Mr. Vanter. "Here is the money!"

He threw a roll of crisp bills on the table.

"I think you 'll find the amount correct," he went on, turning to Mr. Ranquist, who showed every sign of deep chagrin. "I rather guess I 've beaten you at your own game," proceeded the surveyor. "I was prepared for this

little move on your part. Now, if you will kindly cancel the mortgage I guess that will be about all to-day."

There was nothing for Mr. Ranquist to do, but accept the offer, and take the money. He would much have preferred foreclosing the mortgage, since then he would be in possession of the farm and the valuable salt mine.

"How — how 's this?" began Mr. Kimball brokenly. "I did n't know —"

"That 's enough, now," said Mr. Vanter kindly. "I 'm attending to this for you. The mine on your land will be worked by the Pipe Line Salt Company, and not by the Universal," he said to Mr. Ranquist. "Still, if you care to make us an offer, we may be willing to consider it. And, now, let me bid you good day."

Silently receipting for the money, and cancelling the mortgage, Mr. Ranquist, followed by Mr. Dudley and the lawyer, left the room, neither one speaking.

"Hurrah!" cried Adrian, as the door closed on the plotters, "we beat 'em, Roger. Hurrah!"

"And it 's all due to Roger, here," said Mr. Vanter as he shook hands heartily with the boy. "If he had n't discovered the white crystals, and called to see me, these men would now be in possession of the salt mine. As it is, Mr. Kimball still owns it."

"But ye paid th' mortgage," insisted the farmer, to whom the whole transaction was still much of a mystery. "That entitles ye t' th' farm, don't it?"

"You may look upon that as a loan from me," said Mr. Vanter. "A sort of investment. But we are all still

pretty much in the dark. Suppose there is salt in such a small quantity that it will not pay to mine it?"

This idea made every one feel quite anxious.

"We 'll soon find out, however," went on the surveyor, "for I 'm going to sink a shaft to-morrow. Until then we shall have to be patient."

CHAPTER XXIV

DIGGING FOR SALT

EARLY the next morning Mr. Vanter went to the spring-glade, and started the two men at work, sinking the shaft, which they had to abandon so suddenly the day before. The surveyor decided on going straight down, instead of in at a slant, which he had at first believed best. Roger and Adrian watched the operations with interest, as did a throng of people, who were not disturbed as they gathered about the spot. The good news had gone all over Cardiff, and there was not a person, excepting the plotters, but what rejoiced at Mr. Kimball's fortune in saving his land.

The digging progressed slowly, as only a small shaft was to be sunk, and but one man could work in it at a time. For three anxious days the labor went on, the hole in the ground becoming deeper and deeper. The man whose turn it was to go into the excavation was below the level of the surface now. Mr. Kimball, and all his family, as well as the neighbors, were wondering whether or not salt would be struck in sufficient quantities to make the venture pay. If not, it would have been better had Mr. Kimball accepted the offer of Mr. Ranquist. Two days more of digging would tell the story. And those two days were filled

with anxious uneasiness on the part of all in the farm-house. The work went on early and late, and Mr. Kimball neglected all but the most necessary of his duties to watch the progress.

The sinking of the shaft was done in rather a primitive fashion. A hole, almost like that dug for a well, was started, and, when the bottom got so far below the surface that the earth could no longer be tossed out, the men rigged up a windlass and rope, on the end of which was a large bucket, into which the dirt was placed to be hauled up and dumped.

It happened on Wednesday, just a week after the day when the farm was saved, that the men had dug down about thirty feet. Toward the close of the afternoon Roger and Adrian, who were constantly at the mine, had strolled away, and were up in the woods, looking for signs of foxes, which were plentiful that year. They were sitting on a log, idly tossing stones at an old stump, when Adrian suddenly called: "Hark!"

They both listened intently. A faint cry came to them.

"Sounds like some one hollering," said Roger.

"It is!" exclaimed Adrian. "And it 's down by the salt mine. Maybe they 've struck the white crystals. Let 's hurry up and see."

Together they started off. As they came nearer the sounds were louder, and then, they seemed to be, not shouts of delight at the discovery of something long wished for, but, rather, cries of distress.

"Some one 's hurt!" said Roger, increasing his pace.

The boys had reached the edge of the spring-glade now, and could see the mouth of the shaft. But there was no one near it, not even the usual crowd of curious people, Mr. Vanter and Mr. Kimball had, for the time being, gone away, so the scene was deserted. Neither of the two workmen, one of whom should have been at the windlass, was to be noticed.

"There 's been an accident!" exclaimed Adrian.

"I guess the man 's fallen down the shaft," said Roger, referring to the missing laborer. "That 's it," he added excitedly. "They 're both down there! Hear 'em calling?"

And, sure enough, that was where the cries for help came from. The boys ran and peered down into the depths of the hole. For a moment, because of the darkness, they could make out nothing. Then, as their eyes became used to the blackness, they observed, dimly, two figures, at the bottom of the deep excavation. And the figures were those of the two workmen, who seemed to be struggling in desperation. Every now and then would come a terrified cry from one of them:

"Help! Help! Help!"

"What shall we do?" shouted Adrian, almost trembling in the excitement.

"We must get them out!" exclaimed Roger. "Let 's call to them, to let 'em know we 're on hand."

"Hello! Hello!" yelled Adrian down the shaft. "Hello! What 's the matter? What shall we do to help you?"

"Wind up — the — rope! Turn the — windlass!" came faintly from below.

"That's it!" cried Roger, as he seized the crank. "Turn, Ade! Turn!"

The two boys worked the windlass, straining in desperation. It taxed their strength to the utmost, for the weight at the other end of the rope was very heavy. Roger was the first to realize that, in their fear, both men were clinging to the cable, and trying to be brought to the surface at the same time.

"Stop turning," said Roger to Adrian. Then the boys fastened the windlass by the catch at the side of the cog wheel, put there for the purpose. Next, Roger leaned over and shouted down:

"One on the rope at a time! We can't haul you both up together!"

"All right!" came the answer from the black depths. "Jim 'll try it first."

There was a perceptible slacking of the rope, and then Roger and Adrian began winding up the windlass again. This time it was much easier to turn the handle. As the strands of the cable coiled over the drum, foot by foot, they brought up, into the light of day, first the head, then the body of one of the laborers. His face showed the terror he felt, and the boys noticed, with great surprise, that he was dripping wet.

"Hurry!" called Jim. "Tom's down there yet. Lower the rope."

He unfastened it, from where he had looped it beneath

his arms, and tossed it dangling into the hole. It ran out quickly over the drum. There came a cry from below to indicate that Tom had the end. Then, giving him time to adjust it, Jim began to turn quickly, replacing the boys, and soon the other workman was brought up. He too was soaking wet.

"I tell you, that was a narrow squeak!" exclaimed Tom, removing the rope.

"You 're right," chimed in Jim. "As close as I ever want."

"Did you fall in a well?" asked Roger, wondering why the men were so damp.

"Indeed we did, my boy," answered Tom. "And it was a salt well, of the saltiest water I ever tasted. Pah! My mouth is full of it yet."

"Then there is n't any salt mine down there," went on Roger in a disappointed tone, his interest in that matter overshadowing, for a moment, his joy at having helped save the men.

"Nary a bit of a salt mine," said Tom. "But I 'll back the salt lake down there, against most anything outside of Utah. Hey, Jim?"

"That 's right," assented his companion, wiping the salt water from his eyes.

"How did it happen?" asked Adrian.

"Now you 're talkin'," said Tom. "We were diggin' away, or rather I was, and Jim was up above. I 'd got about as deep as where Mr. Vanter said we ought to strike rock salt, and I was givin' some hearty blows with my pick,

when, all on a sudden, the pick goes through with a pop, jest like when you stick a pin in one of them red balloons you buy at the circus. First thing I knew I was up to my neck in water saltier 'n' any ever tasted. Wow! But I did n't know what I 'd struck, the Atlantic Ocean or the Dead Sea."

"I guess it was a little of both," interposed Jim.

"Right you are, Jim. Well, as it happened I landed right on a ledge of rock, or I might have gone on clean through to China," resumed Tom. "As soon as I got my wind I sung out to Jim. All the while I was holdin' on to a projectin' stone in the side of the shaft. When I yelled to Jim I wanted him to lower the rope to me. But he got excited, or somethin', and, after he had unwound it, and lowered it, he shinned down it himself, hand over hand. Then before he could stop himself he was in the water with me, both of us as wet as drowned rats, at the bottom of a shaft thirty feet deep. We could just make out to find room on the narrow ledge, or we 'd both been in the bottomless pit. We tried to climb up the rope, but, not bein' sailors or circus fellows, we did n't make out worth a cent. So we both began to yell as hard as we could, and — well, you know the rest. My! Oh! But it 's glad we are that you boys came along when you did, or we 'd both be fairly pickled away in brine for the winter. How about it, Jim?"

"That 's what," said Jim, heartily, wringing about a quart of salt water from his coat.

"But I can't understand how the brine got down there,"

said Roger. "Mr. Vanter expected to strike rock salt, and the white crystals I brought up were certainly solid enough. I can't see why there should be salt water, unless there 's a spring of fresh water that has become brine from dissolving the rock salt. I must hurry to tell Mr. Vanter."

The boys and men went toward the farmhouse together. On the way they met Mr. Vanter, who was much surprised when he heard what had happened. He hurried to the mine to make sure of it. The men went back with him, not minding the wetting, for the day was warm. Though they tried to deter him, Mr. Vanter insisted on being lowered down the shaft. The boys, who had also come back, were a little apprehensive, when they saw their friend the surveyor disappear down the black hole, but they were soon reassured when they heard his cheery voice shouting from the depths that he was all right, and that he had found a place to stand. In a few minutes he signalled to be drawn up, and, when he reached the surface he looked delighted, instead of disappointed, as the boys had expected.

"Is the salt mine a failure?" asked Roger, anxiously.

"The salt mine is," said Mr. Vanter.

"Oh, dear!" exclaimed Roger and Adrian together.

"But the salt spring is the biggest kind of a success," added Mr. Vanter, smiling. "In fact, we 've struck the same conditions that exist beneath the city of Syracuse. Instead of mining for salt we shall have to pump for it, which is cheaper and better. Boys, I can see big things in this for you. A pipe line can be run out to Syracuse, and

transportation charges will be saved. Tom, that last pick stroke of yours was a mighty lucky one."

"I did n't think so at the time," remarked Tom, as he saw the white salt crystals appearing on his clothes, now that the sun was evaporating the water.

"Hurrah for the Kimball Salt Spring!" cried Adrian, throwing his hat high in the air, and Roger joined in heartily, turning a summersault to show how glad he felt.

"Now to test the brine," said Mr. Vanter, as he sent the men for a pump and the necessary pipes. "But I have no doubt, from the fact that the general character of this valley is the same from here to Syracuse, that we have a fine quality of solution. You have struck it rich, Mr. Kimball," he went on, as the farmer approached, all excitement over the news. "We have n't a mine for you, but we have something better," and he told him what had taken place.

"Wa'al, I knowed suthin' good 'd come outen what seemed dark prospects at fust," said the old farmer, calling to mind the bad news of the loss of his money in the railroad shares, and the mortgage foreclosure. "I knowed suthin' good 'd come, 'n' it 's all along a' Roger here. I sha'n't forgit it, nuther," he added, and Roger, fearing some one was going to praise him in public, hurried to the house.

CHAPTER XXV

THE LAST WRESTLING MATCH

The Cardiff stage, next day, took to Syracuse three very much chagrined and disappointed men, — Mr. Ranquist, Mr. Dudley, and their lawyer. They maintained a silence as they climbed aboard the lumbering vehicle, early in the morning, and the usual crowd that gathered to see the stage depart had no words of farewell for the men who had sought to take such an unfair advantage of Mr. Kimball.

"G'lang!" cried Porter Amidown, cracking his whip, and the horses leaped forward with a jingle of harness. It was the last Cardiff saw of the conspirators.

As for the salt well on Mr. Kimball's farm, it turned out better than even Mr. Vanter dared to hope. The brine was of a heavy and saturated quality, and, when evaporated, gave a residue of excellent salt. It compared favorably with the condiment manufactured in Syracuse, which is considered about the best in the world. One day, when Roger and Adrian were at the well, Mr. Vanter told how, in his opinion, the salt springs beneath the surface of the earth came there.

Geologists were agreed, he said, that, thousands of years ago, the whole Onondaga valley was part of an immense sea. This was evidenced by the fossils found in the hills.

As the ages passed, there were eruptions and upheavals of the earth's surface. Then the salt water from the sea might have been condensed into solid rocks of salt, or the rock salt away down deep in the earth might have been brought nearer the surface. At any rate, in time, the white crystals were formed in great masses. Then, beneath the surface of the ground, there welled up springs of fresh water, which dissolved, and held in solution, the salt. When the shaft had been sunk on Mr. Kimball's land, Mr. Vanter said, meaning the small hole Mr. Ranquist had bored with his sectional drill, the steel had probably only gone into the thin crust of salt, formed over one of the immense and deep underground springs. He was thus deluded, as was Mr. Vanter himself, into the belief that a mine of rock salt had been discovered.

"Mr. Ranquist must have studied the matter up," said Mr. Vanter, "and he reasoned that there ought to be salt in this section of the country. He found it, but not as he expected. I have no doubt that other farmers in this vicinity will be just as lucky as Mr. Kimball has been, and will strike salt springs on their land."

And so it proved. Urged by the example of their neighbor, many farmers had shafts sunk on their hillsides and, in several cases, especially on land near Mr. Kimball's, valuable springs were come upon. The news soon spread to all parts of the county, and, shortly, Cardiff was overrun with prospectors, and men who wished to buy up all the property and develop the salt wells. The owners, under the advice of Mr. Kimball, consulted with Mr. Vanter,

who told them all to be cautious about signing away their rights. Under the guidance of the surveyor, a corporation, called the Pipe Line Salt Company, was formed to work the springs, and pump the brine through big black pipes, into Syracuse, twelve miles away, where the salt water was evaporated, and the resulting crystals purified and sold. For his spring-glade Mr. Kimball received thirty-five thousand dollars and some shares in the new company, which proved very valuable in a short time.

Of all the persons made glad by the discovery of salt in Cardiff, there were none more happy than the two boys, Roger and Adrian. Their part in the transactions was well known, and they were praised on every side.

One day, not long after these events, Roger received a letter by mail that made him want to stand on his head in delight. He raced home from the post-office with the missive half read, and burst into the kitchen, where Mrs. Kimball and Clara were baking bread.

"Hurrah!" he cried. "Father, mother, and baby Edward are coming! They'll be here day after to-morrow. Oh! But won't I be glad to see them!"

"Land sakes!" cried Mrs. Kimball. "Wa'al, now I'm real glad t' hear it. Mussy sakes, Clara! We'll hev t' double this bakin'," and she began to bustle about harder than ever with the salt-rising bread, while Roger ran to tell Adrian the good news.

How the time did drag until Mr. and Mrs. Anderson and the baby arrived on the stage! Roger and Adrian were at the gate to meet them, and Roger hugged his

mother so tightly that she said he nearly took her breath, and was as bad as the bear he wrote about, which treed them all in the woods that day.

How good it was to grasp his father's hand again! And to bounce baby Edward high into the air, and hear him crow and shout in delight! Roger did n't know whether he was on his head or his feet in the gladness at seeing his parents after more than six months' absence from them. Mr. and Mrs. Kimball, Adrian, and Clara gave no less enthusiastic greeting to the newcomers, and, altogether, it was a jolly time.

"My, but how brown you are, and how you 've grown!" said Roger's mother to him.

"Wa'al, I calalate he does look a leetle mite more like a boy should than when I fust see him," admitted Mr. Kimball. "He were kinder white-livered 'n' spindlin' then. But come inter th' house er supper 'll spile, 'n' I know ye don't want anythin' like thet t' happen, 'specially ef yer appetites is anythin' like mine."

Such a happy meal as it was. Mr. Anderson told how he had, unexpectedly, received a vacation, and had determined to use it in coming to see how his son was getting along. Of course Mrs. Anderson and the baby must come too.

"'N' I hope ye kin all stay a year," said Mr. Kimball, heartily.

Mrs. Kimball was so "flustrated," as she put it, that she hardly knew whether she was passing the bread or the cake. But every one agreed that she did most excellently, and there was so much talking and laughing that nobody

seemed to care much whether they ate or not. The day was dying off into a perfect evening. The June sun was sinking down behind the wooded hills. Farmers were returning from their fields, tired but happy. The crickets and tree-toads were beginning their night songs. Darkness was settling down over peaceful Cardiff valley.

"How does it agree with you out here, Roger?" asked Mr. Anderson. "Do you think you would like to stay?"

"Would I?" began Roger. Then he glanced lovingly at his father, mother, and the baby. "I would, if all of you could stay too," he finished.

They had come out on the broad stone porch to sit in the cool twilight.

"We won't know how t' git along 'ithout him," said Mr. Kimball, and then he told all about the salt well, to the secret delight of Mr. Anderson, who felt very proud of his son.

"I 'm afraid we 'll have to have Roger back soon, however," said the boy's father. "His school principal came to see me the other day, and wanted to know when he was coming home to take up his lessons."

Books and studies, save such as beautiful Mother Nature provided, had been almost forgotten by Roger.

"Wa'al," began Mr. Kimball, "when it comes t' school, I 've a sort a' proposition t' make. Ye see, ef it had n't bin fer Roger, I would n't 'a' had any salt spring, 'n' 't ain't no more 'n' common justice thet he should hev a part on it."

"Uncle Bert!" cried Roger.

"Now, young man," interposed Mr. Kimball, good-

naturedly, "young folks should be seen 'n' not heard, ye know. 'S I were sayin'," turning to Mr. Anderson, "Roger 's got t' hev some sheers in my salt spring. Now I hed thought a' puttin' a certain sum t' his credit in th' bank."

Mr. Anderson made a gesture of dissent.

"Jest wait 'til I git through," said Mr. Kimball. "I ain't give up th' notion yet, but what I want t' say is, I think Roger ought t' use part of it t' go t' college 'ith. That 's what I 've planned t' do fer Adrian, here, 'cause there ain't nothin' like eddercation fer a boy, er a man either fer thet matter. I did n't hev no chanst when I were young. Hed t' git out 'n' hustle on th' farm when I were ten year old, so I know th' value a' larnin'. 'N' t' college my boy goes, now I 'm well enough off t' send him," and Mr. Kimball clapped his hand down on his leg with a report like a small gun.

"I 'm sure I don't know how to thank you," began Mr. Anderson. "I —"

"Then jest don't try," broke in Mr. Kimball, very practically. "We 'll consider it all settled."

The women folks started to go in the house, while Mr. Kimball and Mr. Anderson walked a little way toward the road. Presently they heard a great shouting.

"What 's that?" asked Mr. Anderson.

"Reckon it 's th' boys, skylarkin'," replied Mr. Kimball. "They 're allers up t' suthin' er other."

The men walked over toward the sounds, which were evidently of mirth. There, under the two big cherry trees

that stood at the gate, rolling in the sweet grass, were the two cousins; and Roger was sitting astride of Adrian, shouting at the top of his voice:

"I threw him! I threw him! It was a fair fall! Now who 's the best wrestler?"

"Yes, but you can't do it again," panted Adrian, as he struggled unsuccessfully to rise.

"Roger throwed him!" cried Mr. Kimball, capering about, almost as much pleased over his nephew's victory as Roger himself was. "So ye throwed him fair, eh? Wa'al, I told ye we 'd make a Cardiff boy outen ye, ef ye stayed long 'nuff. By Gum! Throwed him good 'n' proper! Now mebby he 'll think some un 'sides him kin rassal."

"Well, well, but that 's a big improvement in Roger," said Mr. Anderson, coming up as the boys resumed their feet. "He 's twice as strong as when I sent him up here. The air and sunshine of the country have made him what he ought to be — a healthy, sturdy boy."

The lads clenched again, rolling over and over in the long grass. The last vestige of daylight disappeared, the chirping of the crickets became louder, the tree-toads croaked with stronger voices, and it was night in the valley of Cardiff.

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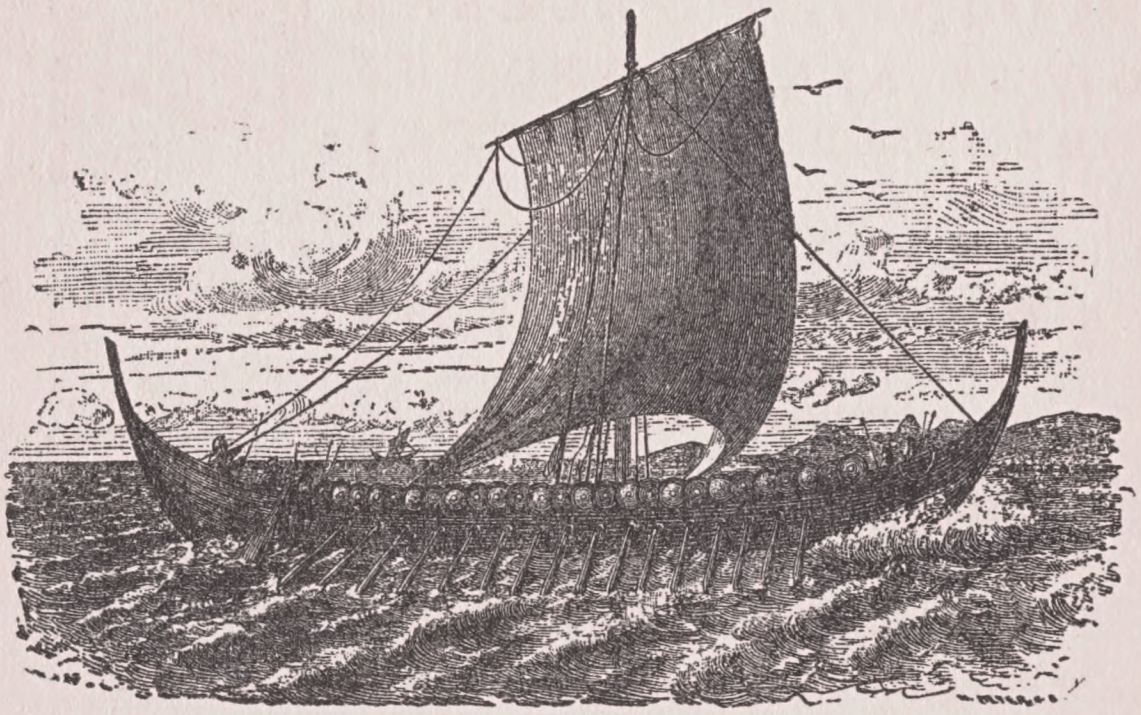

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